MODELING A CONVERSATION ON RACE

A THESIS-PROJECT

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To my grands, Daniel Elijah, Noah, Aidan, Vivienne, Cassian, and those to come.

May you see God's kingdom truly manifest here on earth!

God is looking for broken people.

When He wants anything done, He takes up people who have come

to the end of themselves, whose confidence is not in themselves, but in God.

--Harry Ironside

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ABSTRACT

White evangelical Christians and Black Christians face a ‘wall of hostility’ that is destroying the witness of the church and threatening the growth of multi-ethnic congregations. This study explores how a biblically based curriculum can provide a roadmap for pastors to have difficult conversations, grow in empathy and confidence, and move toward a multi-ethnic congregation through redemptive leadership.

The process includes qualitative and quantitative research methods analyzing survey results of two seminars presented to pastors using a nationally recognized biblically based curriculum. Research outcomes include the value of the seminars in increasing knowledge, attitude, and behavior of the pastors.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My son and his family came home May 22, 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, to quarantine and work remotely. According to him, their condo in Chicago seemed to get smaller every day as their baby girl learned to walk and became more active. We were overjoyed to spend time with them in a safe environment. My joy turned to despair on May 25th, when George Floyd, a Black man, was murdered by a white police officer.[1] This time the horror of Black and Brown people being killed in America played out on video in real time as America watched his murder. As we watched the news, I could see my son's face straining to hold back tears. As the mother of an African American man, I knew this was a very real visualization of the risk he faced every day. The risk that someone would devalue him because of his race, not knowing or caring that he is a son, brother, husband, father, Elder in his church, an attorney, and a US Marine Corps officer. The juxtaposition of seeing my son's anguish and watching George Floyd die made an indelible impression on me that the things I thought would protect me and my family such as education, position, money, and address, would not matter if a human being could be murdered by the police in broad daylight, based solely on his skin color.

Over the past eight years, the murders of unarmed Black men, women and children seemed to come more frequently and with too many unanswered questions. Coupled with the disparity and devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic, our nation was grappling with racial

1. "How George Floyd Died, and What Happened Next," *New York Times,* Nov. 1, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html.

disparities that became more evident in all systems from healthcare to mental health to education to housing and particularly, to policing.

As a Christian, I looked at the need for racial reconciliation from the perspective of my faith. Where was the Christian community in this brokenness and what, if anything were we doing to repair the discordant race relations that were tearing our country apart? Two personal incidences, almost back-to-back, made me realize that the local church was not equipped to address this division any more than the secular community. Both instances are illustrative of three glaring omissions: the need to use key biblical mandates as the basis of conversations on race; the need to develop greater cultural intelligence between white and Black Christians;[2] and the need for Christians to become more redemptive leaders in order to move toward racial reconciliation.

The first experience occurred when I served as a consultant for a Black church on a project to set up a child development center in leased space in a white church. I am a licensed attorney and have worked with this church for over 15 years, first as a member of the staff and currently, as a consultant, on various non-profit start-ups. The Black church had been operating a child development center for over fifty years, maintaining a five-star rating. A white church in a neighboring county approached them about joining a partnership to bring "quality childcare" to this more rural county. This partnership initially consisted of county government, the local

2. Note on capitalization: I capitalize "Black" and lowercase "white" when referring to these two identity groups to follow Brookings' decision, after months of research, to change its style guide in this way. Brookings rationale is as follows: "These actions reflect our part in ensuring, as Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned, that the arc of the moral universe "bends toward justice." D. Lanham and A. Liu, "Not Just a Typographical Change: Why Brookings Is Capitalizing Black," Brookings, September 23, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/research/brookingscapitalizesblack/.

community college, the local child development authority, and the white church. Based on the reputation of the Black church's operation of the child development center, the local child development authority and the white church reached out and asked the Black church to participate in the partnership. The white church had never operated a child development center but had previously leased out space to a Spanish part-day childcare program. Our early conversations with the white church included lots of comparisons to the "problems" with the Spanish program which prompted them to create unusual rules "so this doesn't happen again." The white church appeared to assume that the problems it had with one minority organization, it would also have with the Black church without regard for the differences in expertise or years of experience of the two organizations.

The white church did not appreciate the cultural difference of a Black church nor the organizational structure of this particular Black church. For example, one persistent request the white church had was to meet with the Senior Pastor of the Black church. The white pastor felt comfortable making demands to see the pastor of the Black church without regard to the cultural norms of the Black church. In a church of 8,000 congregants, the Senior Pastor of the Black church cannot personally manage every project which is why this church operates with a decentralized organizational model. In this instance, the person assigned to the project had the authority for decision making and would brief the Senior Pastor, as necessary. The Senior Pastor would not step in and have a meeting on the project because he would not want to undermine the authority of the project manager.

The white church also never considered that some of the problems it experienced with the Spanish program may have been due to the white church's lack of understanding of cultural norms and values associated with different groups. The white church never had a conversation

with the Black church about its experience, how it had achieved five-star status or what it would need to replicate this experience at the white church. The leadership of the white church demonstrated a lack of understanding of the Black church's history and accomplishment and constantly second guessed everything the Black church said it needed to operate a five-star center. The white church disrespected the Black church by withholding and mis-representing information to the third-party funder, manipulating the finances in their favor and checking up with local authorities on whatever the Black church stated regarding rules and regulations. In the end, the white church leadership tried to triangulate the Black church staff with the third-party funder and the local accreditation board, in an attempt to pressure them into agreeing to rules, payments, and regulations without regard for the Black church's fiduciary responsibility for a non-profit business start-up. After the pressure tactics did not work and the Black church representatives would not acquiesce, the white church announced they "had lost trust" and could not work with the Black church. It was clear that the white church lacked cultural intelligence to inform its interactions with other cultures.

Interestingly, after this engagement, I spoke to a Black pastor in the same geographic area, and he called the Senior Pastor of the white church "my good friend." I became intrigued by the possibility of how relationship and understanding the biblical mandates to be intentional about building unity and being a bridge builder could have created a more hospitable relationship between the white church and the Black church that could have resulted in a true partnership.

The second instance was a conversation with a Black friend who was invited to participate in an internal church meeting with a majority white church, with three campuses, that has been working on "integration" since 1985. My friend attends Bible Study Fellowship with a member of the church and was asked to "sit in and tell us what you think" about their integration

team meeting. The Senior Pastor created the integration team to come up with ideas on how to attract more diverse members, inclusive of racial and ethnic minorities, the handicapped, and LGBTQ persons. This church is affluent with three campuses throughout Charlotte.

As part of its community engagement, the church has been in partnership with a local middle school for 12 years. The middle school has a 40% Latino population, 40% Black population and 20% White and Asian population. Yet, the church has not been able to attract any people of a different race or ethnicity to join the church. My friend, in recounting her experience, said that when she attended the integration team meeting it was attended by 15-20 people; there was no clear understanding of why they want to be diverse, who is leading the initiative or what was the strategic plan for implementation.

I reviewed the church's website and interviewed the Senior Pastor, as part of my initial research to understand more about the barriers to moving toward a multi-ethnic congregation. A review of the church's website reveals an all-White leadership team, except for the Minister of Inclusivity, who is the coordinator of the church's collaboration with the middle school. Anecdotally, my friend, who attended the integration meeting, shared a story from the Minister of Inclusivity who stated, "White families at this church treat newcomers as the 'other.' They remind people that they are different. They say things like 'Oh, you must be from the middle school program.'"

During my interview with the Senior Pastor, he shared two examples of how the church has tried to move toward becoming multi-ethnic. First, the church initially had a service for Spanish families at the middle school. This went well for a time, but it was very labor intensive. During this time, the church was expanding its main campus and eventually decided to transition the middle school families, primarily Spanish, to the main campus. According to the Senior

Pastor, some of the families came but ultimately "it felt too uncomfortable for them," and they stopped coming. When I asked why they felt uncomfortable, the pastor replied, "I think it may have been due to economics. For example, when we would suggest that the teens grab $20 and meet at the local bowling alley, many of the Spanish teens wouldn't come. I think it was too expensive for them."

A more recent example of the church trying to move towards a multi-ethnic congregation occurred when some members of the church participated in a 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge (offered by the city of Charlotte, NC). Unfortunately, it was not a facilitated or coordinated church wide initiative nor even a joint initiative for the integration team, and the Senior Pastor did not participate.

The absence of diversity on the leadership team and the insensitive remarks of the congregation demonstrates the white church's lack of cultural intelligence to appreciate the socioeconomic difference between the congregation and the Spanish families. The Senior Pastor's failure to participate in the Racial Equity Challenge or to use it as a learning opportunity for the integration team did not send a strong message of commitment to the process or a recognition of the importance of redemptive leadership. In summary, this church suffers from a misstep in the journey to implement the biblical mandate for unity, an insensitivity to cultural intelligence, and an absence of redemptive leadership.

In the case of both white churches, the leadership of the church does not currently reflect an understanding of their own complicity to the lack of movement toward racial reconciliation or a multi-ethnic church. Complicity in this instance could be the conscious and deliberate decisions to treat minorities as less than or it could be the unconscious implicit bias, ingrained from upbringing or culture, against those who are different. I believe that if similarly situated

leadership participates in the *Be the Bridge* curriculum,[3] they will experience a redemptive awakening which will empower them to begin more fruitful conversations within their church. A redemptive leader must understand their own biases and be committed to sharing their own redemptive story in order to be a transformational leader who can create a community truly reflective of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Setting: The Problem

White Evangelical Christianity in America

From Genesis to Revelation, the scriptures are clear that God's people are called to lead based on the Word of God, not follow the unjust values of the secular world. Sadly, misrepresentation of Scripture and its resultant racism has delayed, and some may assert derailed, the development of multi-ethnic churches. The result of this failure is evidenced by the fact that only 16% of all congregations are multi-ethnic[4] and most, recently, the decline of Black Christians attending multi-ethnic churches. Michael Emerson, addressing the exodus of young Black evangelicals from multi-ethnic churches, notes that the percentage of Blacks in multiethnic churches "jumped all the way up to 27% in 2012. Then we had these stories about the mass exodus, often around the election that happened, and you can see it comes down to 21%. So there is some exodus. Still higher than it has been in the first two times that we measured it, but a fairly substantial decline since."[5] My hypothesis is that white Christian evangelical pastors

3. *Be the Bridge* is a Bible based curriculum that focuses on truth telling and relationship building to address the issues of racism prevalent in America. *Be the Bridge*, https://bethebridge.com/about/.

4. Mark DeYmaz, "New Research on Multiethnic Churches," *Outreach Magazine*, March 29, 2020, https://outreachmagazine.com/features/multiethnic/53748-new-research-on-multiethnic-churches.html.

5. Mark DeYmaz, "New Research on Multiethnic Churches."

need to find their way back to Scripture as the foundational basis to model a conversation on race.

White evangelical Christianity in America has been complicit and absent in fulfilling God's call to be one unified church to demonstrate the love of Christ and to heal the brokenness of relationship between white and Black Christians. This brokenness is the present day "wall of hostility" that Paul preached about in Ephesians. Segregated churches in the United States stem from the underlying sin of racism that seeks to divide humanity based on the color of a person's skin. I have provided, for context, background information to explain how racism has infiltrated the church. The history of race relations in America is not very different than the tensions between Jews and Gentiles throughout biblical history. Gentiles were any ethnic group that were not Israelites. The Israelites considered themselves God's chosen people and looked down on Gentiles. They refused to even associate with Gentiles unless they "became Jews." Gentiles who wanted to become Jews had to go through a purification ritual including baptism, circumcision, and conforming to all the rites of the Mosaic Institutions.[6] And even when they adopted the Jewish faith, they were treated as second class and had limited access to the Temple, being restricted to the outer court.

Similarly, in the United States history has shown a distinct hostility by whites of anyone designated as "other," particularly "people of color."[7] Such hostility and its ensuing actions can only be described as racism. J. Daniel Hayes describes this behavior in the context of theology:

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6. Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible,* 1834, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/matthew/23.htm, Accessed January 3, 2022.

7. People of color in this context refers to Black (African American), Indigenous (Native American), Latinex and Asian American people, commonly referred to as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

"Racism or the presupposition that one's own race is superior or better than another is a denial that all people have been created in the image of God." Hayes goes on to quote theologian H. P. Smith who defines racism as a violation of God: 'In short, racism from the Christian standpoint is a response that violates the equalitarian principle implied in the biblical doctrine of the Imago Dei."[8] Racism, the treatment of human beings as "less than" and therefore inferior to white people, has historically been sanctioned and endorsed by white, evangelical churches, and is the primary reason the church has not led the way in improving race relations or racial reconciliation.

The concept of "race" is usually associated with biology and linked with physical characteristics such as skin color or hair texture. "Ethnicity" is linked with cultural expression and identification. However, both are social constructs used to categorize and characterize seemingly distinct populations.[9] Race is a social construct developed to justify discriminatory treatment of people who are non-white. Theodore Allen provides the reason for its origin as "a social construct that arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to justify the overtaking and enslaving of whole people groups."[10]

Creating a social construct that allowed the treating of Africans as though they were less than human and not made in the image of God was sinful behavior. Cornelius Plantinga explains why: "Sin offends God not only because it bereaves or assaults God directly, as in impiety or

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8. J. Daniel Hayes and D.A. Carson*, From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 50.

9. Erin Blakemore, "Race and ethnicity: How are they different?" *National Geographic*, February 22, 2019, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/race-ethnicity.

10. Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race, Vol. II, Racial Oppression and Social Control*, (London: Verso, 1997).

blasphemy, but also because it bereaves and assaults what God has made. Sexism and racism, for example, show contempt both for various human persons and also for the mind of God."[11] Sin was not only the breaking of the law or a relationship, but most importantly "sin is a culpable and personal affront to a personal God."[12] This sinful behavior gave slave owners permission to justify slavery based on four ideological bases: biblical reasons, charitable and evangelistic reasons, social reasons, and political reasons.

- Biblical Reason: Canaan, Ham's son, was made a slave to his brothers (Gen 9:24-27).
- Charitable and Evangelical Reason: Slavery brings heathens to a Christian land where they can hear the gospel. Christian masters provide religious instruction for their slaves.
- Social Reason: Just as women are called to play a subordinate role (Eph 5:22; 1 Tim 2:11–15), so slaves are stationed by God in their place.
- Political Reason: The church should concentrate on spiritual matters, not political ones.[13]

The fallacy of each of these reasons has been addressed at great length by other authors so I will not go into detail here except to briefly explain key justifications, in each category, to provide context for the biblical and theological foundations supporting the hypothesis of this thesis-project.

The "curse of Ham" is a very old myth often told in the American South to justify slavery. David Goldberg has conducted an extensive study to understand how this interpretation of the Bible took hold, confirms "[i]t is strange justification indeed, for there is no reference in it

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11. Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 16.

12. Plantinga, *Not the Way It's,* 13.

13. "Why Did So Many Christians Support Slavery?", Christian History, 1992, *Christianity Today*, accessed January 2, 2022, https:// www . christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-33/why-christians-supported-slavery.html.

to Blacks at all"[14] The myth evolved from the story of Noah's drunkenness resulting in his nakedness being seen by his son Ham. Ham, instead of covering his father, shares Noah's shameful condition with his brothers, Shem and Japheth. Noah, upon finding out about Ham's behavior curses Ham's son, Canaan. This story gave roots to a theory that the three sons of Noah (Japheth, Shem and Ham) resulted in the three races of mankind (white, Asian, and Black respectively), and that the Black race was cursed to be the servant of the white race. This interpretation flows from a faulty interpretation of the Hebrew word *hām*. According to J. Daniel Hays, "Indeed, the consensus view of Old Testament scholarship is that it is impossible to state with any degree of certainty what Ham means – or Japheth and Shem, for that matter."[15] Nevertheless, this myth became one of the foundational rationales for enslaving Africans.

Charitable or evangelistic concerns were erroneously based on the belief that Africans did not know about the one true God. Such belief is not supported by scripture or historical accounts. The Old Testament testifies to the visit of the Queen of Sheba who marveled at the goodness of the God of Solomon, in 1 Kings 10:9: "Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king to maintain justice and righteousness."[16] Sheba is variously

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14. David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.* Jews, Christians & Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), https://gordonconwell.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString= The%20Curse %20 of%20Ham %3A%20Race%20and%20Slavery%20in%20Early%20Judaism%2C%20Christianity%20and%20 Islam%2C%20&clusterResults=true&stickyFacetsChecked=true&baseScope=sz%3A36213&groupVariantRecords=false&scope=sz%3A36213.

15. Hayes and Carson, *From Every People and Nation,* 58.

16. All Scripture refences are to the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

believed to be in Africa or in the Middle East.[17] The New Testament shares the expansion of the gospel into Africa with the story of the Ethiopian court official's interaction with the Apostle Philip. ″So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah" (Acts 8:27-28 NRSV).

During the early colonial period in America, the idea that Africans were just beasts of burden relegated to labor began to change when the Quakers led the call to "Christianize" enslaved people.[18] This concept of saving the enslaved, and then baptizing them created one of the most difficult conundrums for the new country. If slaves accepted Christ and became baptized, would the slave be free from sin *and* free from slavery? The clergy developed a three-prong plan to preserve the social order. First, the clergy "encouraged several colonial legislatures to declare that slaves remained slaves even when baptized." Second, the clergy asked the Anglican Bishop to request a formal opinion from the British Attorney General and Solicitor General that baptism did not negate slave status. And third, the clergymen argued that "Christian liberty in no way changed temporal bondage."[19] Michael O. Emerson gives, as the primary reason for this self-serving decision, the fact that "[t]he clergy, being part of the same

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17. Francisco del Rio Sanchez, *Where did the Queen of Sheba Rule – Arabia or Africa?*, (June 7, 2021), https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2021/06/where-did-the-queen-of-sheba-rule-arabia-or-africa.

18. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22.

19. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith,* 23.

sociocultural environment" supported the continued enslavement of Africans for their own economic benefit even after they became baptized Christians.[20]

Early antislavery activists believed their mission was primarily one of evangelizing and disciplining the flock. The antislavery advocates believed that if you changed the person, the social problems would eventually go away, too. This early belief in focusing on spiritual matters only was easily cast aside when it did not benefit the goal. One example is the founder of American evangelicalism, George Whitfield, a supporter of "radical equality in Christ, [who] shared the salvation message with slaves, [yet] he was a supporter of slavery."[21] Whitfield appealed to the trustees of the newly formed Georgia colony to use slaves at the orphanage he was planning to open in their state. He based his appeal on religious and economic arguments that "God had created the Georgia climate for the blacks, that the large investment in the colony would be lost without increased production, that the orphanage would not survive without the benefit of slaves, and, consistent with his calling, the unsaved would become saved."[22] Whitfield became a slave owner to support the orphanage and was responsible, in part, for the repeal of the slave exclusion originally prohibited in Georgia.

White, Christian clergy preached that just as the Bible called on women "to be subordinate to men," enslaved people were expected to remain subordinate regardless of their status as Christians. Conversion to Christianity created a fear that the enslaved would feel empowered by this newfound religious freedom and revolt. Christianity was preached to the

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20. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 23.

21. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith,* 26.

22. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 26-27.

enslaved as a benefit for life after death, but not a benefit in one's status during life. Emerson highlights that the white Christian fear of chaos and revolt caused them to participate in a host of activities to preserve order: "Christians along with others rode patrol, served as constables, administered the whippings, and generally maintained the private tyranny by which whites asserted their mastery."[23]

The Current Context

In 2020 a cataclysmic rift was exposed in the white and Black Christian communities. I devoured books and articles trying to make sense of the noticeable silence of our churches amid the racial unrest facing our country. The silence of churches during this period of racial awakening, foreshadowed a decline in the movement toward multi-ethnic churches since its significant growth over the past two decades. The racial reckoning of 2020 began to reverse the movement toward multi-ethnic churches as more African Americans left because white pastors were having difficulty or refused to address the horrific murders of Black and Brown people and the rioting that happened in response, across our nation. Black Christians saw the racial inequities in many American systems and white Christians either did not understand or did not know how to respond in a way that affirmed the hurt and pain that was exposed. The absence of lament within the church, especially with those who are suffering from racism, resulted in many African Americans moving back to Black churches because white Christians could not or would not address the racial reckoning occurring in our country.[24] According to the recent Barna

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23. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith,* 25.

24. Dara Mathis, "The Church's Black Exodus," *The Atlantic*, October 11, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ politics/archive/2020/10/why-black-parishioners-are-leaving-churches/616588/.

research, *Beyond Diversity*, "Only two in five practicing Christians (38%) believe the U.S. "definitely" has a race problem. This percentage more than doubles, however, among Black practicing Christians (78%)."[25] This is in direct contrast to the certainty of belief in racism's impact among those who aren't religious. Barna writes that "three in five of those who identify as having no faith (60%) "definitely" affirm racism is a problem.[26] The recent exodus of Black Christians away from multi-ethnic churches and the denial of white Christians that there is even a problem, demonstrates a significant divide between white and Black Christians which could significantly erode the multi-ethnic church movement and ultimately, the witness of the church.

The inability of white Christians to address racism can be linked to long held racial opinions and ongoing bias stemming from slavery. Robert P. Jones, citing a statistical analysis linking county-level slave ownership from the 1860 US Census and public opinion data collected between 2006 and 2011 found that there was "a remarkably enduring impact of slavery on how contemporary white people think, feel, and act today."[27] Jones highlights the findings:

> Whites residing in areas that had the highest levels of slavery in 1860 demonstrate significantly different attitudes today than whites who reside in areas that had lower historical levels of slavery: 1) they are more politically conservative and Republican leaning; 2) they are more opposed to affirmative action; and 3) they score higher on questions measuring racial resentment. After accounting for a range of other explanations and possible intervening variables, [the political scientists conducting the analysis] conclude that "present-day regional differences, then, are the direct, downstream consequences of the slaveholding history of these areas.[28]

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25. Barna Group, "What the future of racial justice will require of U.S. churches." *Beyond Diversity* (N.p., 2021), 43.

26. Barna Group, *Beyond Diversity*, 43.

27. Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 156.

28. Jones, *White Too Long,* 156.

While this historical information is disheartening this is a spiritual issue for Christians. Jones reminds us that Christians are not just wrestling with sin but with the principalities and powers of the supernatural world controlling cultural and institutional power.[29]

I wrestled with how we can continue to move toward multi-ethnic congregations and racial reconciliation, when we are polarized by the lack of acknowledgement of racism, avoidance of difficult conversations, unforgiveness, and the fear of saying the wrong thing. Even as I began to understand how we got to this place of division and unrest within the Christian community and our lack of ability to even talk to one another about difficult issues of race, racism, and white supremacy, I queried, what do we do about it?

Just as I was giving up hope, I found the *Be the Bridge* curriculum that focuses on biblical principles as the foundation to building a bridge for racial reconciliation which is a first step toward a multi-ethnic congregation. From October 2020 through May 2021, I participated in a multi-ethnic group of women who used this curriculum as a foundation for discussing their personal stories, what the Bible teaches as guiding principles that can be used for racial reconciliation, and how to move toward a more ethnically diverse community. Out of this experience I gained greater insight into the fears and concerns of white Christians, confronted my own unforgiveness, and forged new relationships that have inspired me to continue working in the space of racial reconciliation. The basis for this transformation was the common biblical principles of unity, reconciliation, the goal of a multiethnic kingdom and the importance of redemptive leadership. Having a better understanding of God's guidance, I was curious how this could benefit a group of pastors and lay leaders in my hometown.

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29. Robert P. Jones, "The sacred work of white discomfort," *Religion News Service*, January 27, 2022, https://religionnews.com/2022/01/27/the-sacred-work-of-white-discomfort/.

Setting: The City

Charlotte, North Carolina is the 15th largest city in the nation and known as "The City of Churches" due to its high concentration of over 700 houses of worship.[30] Charlotte is home to a population of 886,000 people of which 41.5% are white, 35.2% are Black, 6.5% are Asian and 14.3% are Hispanic.[31] Charlotte is also known as a "New South" city because of its "spirit of reinvention" after the Civil War.[32] In 2016, the American Bible Society ranked Charlotte in the top ten "Bible-minded" cities.[33] The study, according to one news article, "defines a "Bible-minded" person as someone who read a Bible within the past seven days and "agrees strongly with the accuracy of the Bible."[34]

Charlotte is religious, progressive, and diverse; yet race still plays a significant factor in the upward mobility of its residents. In a 2014 study by Harvard University, Charlotte was ranked 50th for economic mobility among the 50 largest U.S. metro areas.[35] The study showed that "[l]ow economic mobility disproportionately affects people of color. A Black child growing

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30. Chris Pearce, *"Why Charlotte is known as 'The City of Churches,'* chrispearce52 (blog), January 22, 2016, https://chrispearce52.wordpress.com/2016/01/22/why-charlotte-is-known-as-the-city-of-churches/.

31. United States Census Bureau, "Quick Facts," (July 1, 2021), https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/charlottecitynorthcarolina.

32. Tom Hanchett*, The History of Charlotte*, https://www.charlottesgotalot.com/articles/history/the-history-of-charlotte, Accessed August 5, 2021.

33. American Bible Society, "*The Most Bible-Minded Cities in America."* America's Most Bible-Minded Cities 2016, https://americanbible.org/features/americas-most-bible-minded-cities, Accessed August 3, 2021.

34. WBTV, *"Charlotte ranks among most "Bible-minded" cities,"* Jan. 24, 2014, https://www.wbtv.com/story/24541131/charlotte-ranks-among-most-bible-minded-cities/.

35. David Boraks, *"Report Confirms Charlotte's Lack of Upward Mobility*, *Offers Priorities*," WFAE, Race & Equity, November 20,2020, https://www.wfae.org/local-news/2020-11-20/report-confirms-charlottes-lack-of-upward-mobility-offers-priorities.

up in a low-income home, in Charlotte, can expect a household income of $21,599 a year at age 34. It's $32,087 for a Hispanic child, and $22,637 for a native American child. A white child can expect $34,256."[36]

Many in the Charlotte community could not believe the disparity that existed, was as significant as reported. Peaceful protests, which erupted into violence following the police shooting of Keith Lamont Scott, an African American father, followed closely after the release of the Harvard report. The report and the protests were a wake-up call for the city. In response, Charlotte-Mecklenburg [the county] formed a Task Force to devise a path forward. The Task Force, as reported in the initial report found that "[t]he protests ignited by the police shooting of Mr. Scott and the string of similar incidents elsewhere have focused our collective attention on the stark racial, ethnic, and economic divides that exist in our community but are rarely openly discussed."[37] This stark divide is also very evident in the church and equally, rarely openly discussed.

Setting: The Multi-Ethnic Church

Multi-ethnic churches were initially formed for a variety of reasons ranging from economic survival to a demonstration of inclusiveness. "While less frequent today than in the 1980s," Kathleen Garces-Foley reports that "it is still the case that some churches are motivated

36. Boraks, "*Report Confirms Charlotte's Lack."*

37. Leading on Opportunity, "*Our Children. Their Future. Our Commitment,*" The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force Report, March 2017, https://www.leadingon opportunity.org/report/introduction; https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.leadingonopportunity. org/downloads/LeadingOnOpportunity_Report-Compressed.pdf, 1.

to embrace the newcomer as a means of survival."[38] As neighborhoods changed and minorities moved in or the economics of the community became depleted, some churches merged because their communities were changing and if they did not merge, they would die. White evangelicals with more flexible institutional structures participated in the white flight to the suburbs to follow their congregations.[39] Some churches became multi-ethnic because it was "the thing to do" to demonstrate that the church was not racist. Lamont Francis observes that "[m]ono-racial churches now appear outdated and reflect the dreadful racial history that many Americans soon want to forget."[40]

These mergers may have been performative or good economically, but they were not premised on seeking unity among believers. There was not a desire to be bridge builders between ethnic groups or groups differentiated economically. New members were not embraced and were often expected to just assimilate to the dominant culture, which was most often white. Jarvis Williams describes this limited perspective of multi-ethnic churches as a re-creation of the plantation.

> The result will be multi-ethnic church plantations (predominately white churches with predominately white leadership seeking to conform ethnic minorities into the cultural idea of ethnic/cultural whiteness) instead of Spirit-empowered, multi-ethnic, gospel-centered churches whose members are seeking to pursue reconciliation with one another regardless of ethnic, racial, and economic differences, as the members put one another's

38. Kathleen Garces-Foley, *New Opportunities and New Values: The Emergence of the Multicultural Church*, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, July 2007, vo. 612, 220, https://www-jstor-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/stable/pdf/25097937.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5eb407804647cb939745660df9d68292.

39. Mark Mulder, *Shades of White Flight: Evangelical Congregations and Urban Departure*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

40. Lamont Francis, *The Mask of Multicultural Churches*, The Witness, https://thewitnessbcc.com/the-mask-multicultural-churches/, Accessed November 7, 2021.

needs before their own and as they seek to listen to, learn from, and serve one another in love.[41]

For those churches looking to start a multiethnic church for biblical reasons church planting seems to be the best route to build church unity from the beginning. Derwin Gray, Lead Pastor of Transformation Church in Indian Land, SC started a church more than 10 years ago that reflects the diversity of the community in which it is located (58% white; the remainder mixed between Black, Latino and Asian. The county is 71% White and 21% Black.) Gray believes in the importance of implementing a multiethnic approach from the foundation of the church.[42] Ryan Brooks, Pastor of Vertical, a seven-year-old multicultural church in Hillsborough, NC confirms that a multi-ethnic church must start from a biblical basis: "It's not a church growth strategy. It's a gospel strategy. I don't believe diversity is the goal. The goal is unity in the Scripture. When unity is the goal, diversity is the byproduct."[43]

The Need: The Biblical Mandates

Christians can and should be agents of racial reconciliation through the growth of multi-ethnic churches, but the multi-ethnic church must be created on a biblical foundation and it must be led by a redemptive leader. I will explore four mandates that form the biblical foundation for God's call for the church: 1) to demonstrate unity, 2) to be bridge builders and ambassadors of reconciliation, 3) to be redemptive leaders and 4) to be multi-ethnic.

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41. Jarvis Williams, "How to Avoid Becoming an Unhealthy, Multi-Ethnic Church Plantation," *The Witness*, May 5, 2016, https://thewitnessbcc.com/unhealthy-multi-ethnic-church-plantation/.

42. Carey Nieuwhof and Brooke Hempell, "ChurchPulse Weekly Conversations: Derwin Gray on Leading a Multiethnic Church." Barna, April, 8, 2021. https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-derwin-gray/.

43. Yonat Shimron, "Study: Multiracial churches are growing, but racial unity may be elusive," *Washington Post*, November 13, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/study-multiracial-churches-are-growing-but-racial-unity-may-be-elusive/2020/11/13/d688163a-25b6-11eb-8672-c281c7a2c96e_story.html.

The first biblical mandate is the call to Christian unity. Jesus prayed for the church to show unity in John 17:23. The beauty of unity in the church is the glory that it gives to Christ. The world would know the love and power of Christ as exemplified through the unity of believers from every socioeconomic group. Unity requires awareness and acknowledgement of truth. To be in unity, we must build relationship by being aware of the lived experiences of others. Many, if not most, white, evangelical Christians have not truly listened to the impact of the racial history of America, the current realities, and the ensuing damage to Black Americans mentally, physically, or economically. The white Christian's failure to listen and understand is now causing spiritual harm to Black Christians resulting in them turning away from multi-ethnic churches. Telling the truth to build unity is part of Christ's prayer: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17). James Loewen suggests that not telling the truth about history could hide the truth of today: "Conversely, a topic that is mystified or distorted in our history, like secession, usually signifies a continuing injustice in the present, like racism. Telling the truth about the past can help us make it right from here on."[44]

The second biblical mandate is to be bridge builders and ambassadors of reconciliation. Paul discusses our role as ambassadors of the ministry of reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:18-20 where we are called to represent Christ as we seek to share the message of salvation. Just as Christ was sent to be our reconciler, to make things right between Himself and the world, we are called to do the same as bridge builders healing our broken relationships with God and each other.

There are several steps to racial reconciliation which are necessary for any congregation to establish relationship and build trust with underrepresented groups of people. White,

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44. James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, (New York: The New Press, 2018), xix.

evangelical Christians will be able to build a bridge with Black Christians by lamenting with them (James 4:8-10); acknowledging communal shame and guilt (Dan 9:8 and Ezra 9:5-6); confessing one to another (Jas 5:16 and Rom 28:13); mutually forgiving one another (Eph 4:31-32); and seeking to make amends (Num 5:5-7 and Luke 19:8).

The third biblical mandate is to be redemptive leaders who are committed to creating communities of faith that reflect all of those made in God's image. Spiritual leaders are needed who pursue "greater self-awareness, learn greater self-management, and commit to self-development."[45] A spiritual leader recognizes that God shapes our heart through our experiences, both successes and failures. God redeems us to use "*all* the events of our lives…to forge in us our redemptive influence for His kingdom."[46]

The fourth mandate is to create multi-ethnic communities that are inclusive of all of the ethnic, social, and economic diversity of God's kingdom. Jesus calls us to two commandments: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt 22:37-39). We cannot love God and not love those made in His image. As part of that love, we should want to share the gospel message and care for the wellbeing of others, as we care for our own. This requires us to be in relationship and evangelizing across every facet of diversity. Christ came to set all sinners free, yet churches reflect more club status than the diverse kingdom of God. Just as Paul saw in his vision, the

45. Reggie McNeal*, A Work of Heart*, (San Francisco: Wiley Imprint, 2011), xiv.

46. Harvey Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, (N.p.: Illumify Media Global, 2018), 13.

Kingdom of God will reflect "every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." (Rev. 7:9).

The Project

My primary goal in this project is to identify a tool that can help pastors develop greater confidence in having conversations on race within their congregations to facilitate racial reconciliation and move toward a redemptive multi-ethnic church. One of the first requirements would be to increase the cultural intelligence of pastors seeking to have these conversations. According to David Livermore, cultural intelligence is a way of assessing and improving effectiveness for culturally diverse situations. There are four steps in cultural intelligence, with the first being CQ drive or motivation. The optimum tool is a curriculum that is biblically based, that would aid in increasing cultural intelligence and be easy to reproduce.

In preparation for this project, I reviewed three curricula: *Be the Bridge*[47] by Latasha Morrison, *The Multi-Ethnic Christian Primer*[48] by Mark DeYmaz and Oneya Fennell Okuwobi and *Living Undivided*[49] by Chuck Mingo. I was particularly looking for a "first step" curriculum that addressed cultural intelligence, provided a biblical and theological foundation and could stand alone without additional teaching or preaching requirements. I will discuss my review of the three curricula and why I think *Be the Bridge* is the right first step curriculum.

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47. LaTasha Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2019).

48. Mark DeYmaz and Oneya Fennell Okuwobi, *The Multi-Ethnic Christian Primer,* (Little Rock AR: Mosaix Global Network, 2013).

49. Chuck Mingo, *Living Undivided*, (Cincinnati: 2015, amended 2021). https://assets.ctfassets.net/ y3a9myzsdjan/ 31kft3ix5vfYCXbS4SfWzT/5f28a8c50a61010cbfdba4a737b2d8f1/LU_Curriculum_NEW.pdf.

The project will consist of two four-hour seminars, hosted one week apart. A diverse group of 14-18 pastors will be invited to participant in a facilitated, abbreviated overview of the curriculum with time for small group discussion and large group de-brief. The course curriculum will be supplemented by a cross-cultural ice breaker, an introductory quiz, online videos, an interview with the granddaughter of Ku Klux Klan members, and a homework assignment utilizing a virtual history tour with a local historian. A white pastor will serve as co-facilitator to model a collaborative approach. The project participants will engage in conversations that will highlight the four biblical mandates through topics such as racial injustice; the theological basis for acknowledgement, lament, confession, redemptive leadership, and making amends; and the importance of reproducing the learning that takes place. Additionally, the conversations will explore the redemptive value of leaders acknowledging and confessing their own learning to guide others. The conversations on cultural intelligence will highlight the need to see people in their full diversity and appreciate their differences and what that can mean to the body of Christ.

Hypothesis

Eugene Cho writes: "In an era where we seem to be increasingly divided along racial lines, many are hesitant to step into the gap, fearful of saying or doing the wrong thing. At times the silence, particularly within the church, seems deafening. But change begins with an honest conversation among a group of Christians willing to give voice to unspoken hurts, hidden fears, and mounting tensions."[50]

50. Eugene Cho, *Be The Bridge*, (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2019), back cover.

In light of the historical complexities of racism, its enduring effects, and the lack of a successful secular framework, I believe that using a biblically based curriculum will help move a certain group of pastors and lay leaders to have difficult conversations, grow in empathy and confidence and move closer to creating redemptive multi-ethnic congregations.

History teaches us that white evangelical Christians have not adhered to the biblical mandates of loving God with all their hearts and loving their neighbor as themselves with respect to how they have treated BIPOC. Robert Jones writes "The relationship between holding racist views and white Christian identity is actually stronger among more frequent church attenders than among less frequent church attenders."[51] The following passages will set forth the biblical and theological framework for this research and will establish the basis for the literature review, project development and data analysis to be discussed in subsequent chapters.

51. Robert P. Jones, "Racism among white Christians is higher than among the nonreligious. That's no coincidence." *NBC News*, THINK: Opinion, Analysis, Essays, July 27, 2020, https://ww.nbcnews.com/think /opinion/racism-among-white-christians-higher-among-nonreligious-s-no-coincidence-ncna1235045.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will explore the biblical and theological mandates for Christian reconciliation leading to the formation of the multi-ethnic church through the commitment of a redemptive leader. It will focus on why reconciliation has been slow coming to the "church."

The church in America has been complicit and absent in fulfilling God's call to be one unified church to demonstrate the love of Christ and to heal the brokenness of relationship between white, evangelical and Black Christians. Segregated churches in the United States originated from the underlying sin of racism that seeks to divide humanity primarily based on the color of a person's skin.[1] Racism in the United States is the direct result of discriminatory laws and behavior that allowed for the enslavement and disenfranchisement of people of color for over 400 years. These laws were sanctioned by the church in direct defiance of God's call for unity, brotherhood, and reconciliation.

Creation of Humanity

Scripture tells us that all people are made in the image of God. "So God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27) Paul confirms that there is one human race when he told the men of Athens about the creation work of the one true God, "From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth." (Acts 17:26)

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1. Mark A. Noll, "The negro question lies far deeper than the slave question," in *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis,* (Chapel Hill: university of North Carolina Press, 2006), 51-74.

Some secular worldviews tell us that there are different races of people, and some are superior to others. Theologian James Cone, in his first book identifies *liberation* as the heart of the Christian gospel and shares this commentary: "It is a sad fact that the white church's involvement in slavery and racism in America simply cannot be overstated. It not only failed to preach the kerygmatic word but maliciously contributed to the doctrine of white supremacy."[2] The concept of different races is a social construct that is unsupported by Scripture or science.[3] While there are different nations (Gen. 10) and different languages (Gen 11), in the sight of God, all humans are equal. (Gal 3:28)

The Bible has been misrepresented, redacted, and intentionally misused to perpetuate myths and lies that serve to create and maintain hostility for a nefarious purpose. Hermeneutics, which is how one interprets the Bible was not based on the context of the passage but the ethnocentric perspective of the slave owners who used situational ethics to justify their practices. As Noll writes, "while oceans of ink were spilled in trying to decide whether the Bible legitimated slavery, far less biblical analysis was devoted to the broader American economy of which slavery was a part and to principles of economic justice."[4]

Two stark examples demonstrate how the Bible was used to perpetuate and sustain the system of slavery in the United States. First, the myth of the curse of Ham originated out of a

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2. James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1969, 2018 repr.), 81.

3. Blakemore, "Race and Ethnicity"
NOTE: Neither race nor ethnicity is detectable in the human genome. Humans do have genetic variations, some of which were once associated with ancestry from different parts of the world. But those variations cannot be tracked to distinct biological categories. Genetic tests cannot be used to verify or determine race or ethnicity, though the tests themselves are associated with an increased belief in racial differences. Though race has no genetic basis, the social concept of race still shapes human experiences.

4. Noll, *The Civil War*, 52.

misreading of Genesis 9:20-27 and was an attempt to justify treating Africans as inferior or less than human in an attempt to minimize objection to the transatlantic slave trade.

> Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.
>
> When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said,
>
> "Cursed be Canaan!
> The lowest of slaves
> will he be to his brothers."
>
> He also said,
>
> "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Shem!
> May Canaan be the slave of Shem.
> May God extend Japheth's[b] territory;
> may Japheth live in the tents of Shem,
> and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth."

A reading of the text indicates the curse was on Canaan, not Ham. And the text does not indicate the ethnicity of any of the sons. Over the late sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century, a wide variety of authors would exploit the text of Genesis 9:20-27 to "evoke a single, and by now racist, image of a black-skinned, hypersexualized, pagan slave. A pattern developed of a "Curse Matrix," wherein each new contrivance built on the previous configuration and

added to it. This Matrix was then expanded and used for more than a century to repel any attack against the practice of African slavery in the English colonies of America."[5]

Stephan R. Hayes, describes how the antebellum interpreters found justification for slavery in Genesis 9:

> The biblical text's invitation to view Ham as a sexual offender or voyeur, the need to identify a crime commensurate with Noah's punishment, and the prominence of sexual themes in the history of interpretation-we should expect a thorough sexualization of the story among Bible readers who wished to sanction the enslavement of Ham's putative offspring. Further, given the general propensity to view members of marginalized groups as sexual predators, a sexualized Ham would be doubly attractive to members of the Southern Bible-reading elite.[6]

Steven L. McKenzie, writes: "The attempts to justify slavery or oppression of black people based on this passage are obviously erroneous and the product of a kind of modern racism that the Bible neither reflects nor supports."[7]

The second example is the "slave Bible," used by slaveholders to restrict parts of the Bible from being read by enslaved people lest they see the full character of God. The slave Bible told of Joseph's enslavement but left out the liberation of the Israelites by Moses. The story of Joseph was intended to convey someone sold into slavery who accepted his station in life and would ultimately be rewarded…usually in heaven. Most of the Old Testament and half of the

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5. David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery*. St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History, (London: Routledge, 2016), https://gordonconwell.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=David%20M.%20Whitford%20The%20Curse%20of%20Ham&clusterResults=true&stickyFacetsChecked=true&baseScope=sz%3A36213&groupVariantRecords=false&scope=sz%3A36213.

6. Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*. Religion in America Series. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 68.

7. Steven L. McKenzie, All *God's Children: A Biblical Critique of Racism*, (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 8-10, https://web-p-ebscohost-com.gordonconwell. idm.oclc.org/ehost /ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzQxMjkyX19BTg2?sid=f57fbec3-18e3-4a6b-a735-c2d302225764@redis&vid =0&format=EB&rid=1.

New Testament was missing from this version of the Bible as were sections that addressed equality among men (Gal 3:28) or the book of Revelation which described the new heaven and earth in which evil will be punished.[8]

As God's image bearers, our differences are uniquely reflective of God in all his infinite being. He did not create some human beings better than others and shows no favoritism but accepts from every nation those who fear him and do what is right. (Acts 10:34-35) As Christians, we are called to live a life according to the Scripture, not the myths and lies of the secular world. The expectation of how we are to live as Christians is summed up in two commandments: Love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt 22:37; Mark 12:31)

These two commandments are the guiding principles for the implementation of what evangelicals call the "great commission": "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15) The following Bible passages provides clear guidance on four mandates to live out these commandments and to serve out the great commission: (1) We are called to be unified so that others will see the glory of God (John 17:20); (2) We are reconciled to Christ so that we can be ambassadors of reconciliation (Col 1:19-22; 2 Cor 5:20); (3) We are called to reflect the full diversity of the Imago Dei in our worship (Rev 7:9); and (4) Christ has redeemed us so that we can be redemptive leaders (Ps 107:2).

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8. Becky Little, "Why Bibles Given to Slaves Omitted Most of the Old Testament," *History*, updated: Apr. 3, 2019, https://www.history.com/news/slave-bible-redacted-old-testament.

The following mandates set the Biblical framework for how the church is called to the ministry of reconciliation that will encourage the growth of multi-ethnic churches through the intentionality of redemptive leaders who are committed to replicating God's kingdom of diversity in the present age.

Christian Unity Mandate

Biblical and Theological Implications

> I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.
>
> I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. (John 17:20-23)

Christ prayed for Christian unity in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he was crucified. "John 17 consists of three separate parts: (1) a petition by Jesus for himself (vv. 1-8); (2) an intercession by Jesus for his disciples (vv. 9-24); and (3) a recapitulation by Jesus of his ministry and a recommitment by him to his mission (vv. 25-26)."[9] For the purpose of this thesis-project, we will center our attention on that section of Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples and those who will become disciples in the future (vv. 20-23). Jesus prayed for the protection of his disciples who he knew would be in the minority, subject to persecution, and engaging a hostile world. He also prayed that the disciples would be unified as one so that

9. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John*, (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 232.

through their attitudes and behaviors they would demonstrate to the world that God sent his Son to save humanity.

In order to understand this call to Christian unity it is important to briefly trace the origin of human unity, how it was severed, and how Christ has redeemed the enmity caused by sin.

As Christians we must acknowledge that our common humanity is based on the clear words of Scripture. We are all human, regardless of ethnicity, because of our common creation made in the image of God. Apologist Douglas Groothuis, describing the concept of Imago Dei, writes "If Christianity is true, then humans stand in a unique relationship to both God and the rest of creation. They represent God as God's image bearers and so resemble God as moral and personal beings, but on a finite scale (Gen 1:26)."[10] As image bearers, this humanity is shared equally by all people, regardless of color, social or economic status.

The Fall brought sin into the world and corrupted how we interact with one another and with God. After eating the fruit of the tree, Eve and Adam's relationship deteriorated. Instead of living in a perfect place and enjoying a perfect relationship, their relationship became fractured, and they lacked a sense of individual or mutual accountability. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Neither Adam nor Eve took responsibility for their individual actions or their communal failure. (Gen 3:8-13)

A critical result of Fall is that the sinful disposition of a person's heart now passed down to all mankind. Christians who have engaged in the brutal history of slavery in the United States have a corrupted view of the divine image of God in others, particularly in people of color and people of low socioeconomic status. Michael Cassidy provides a perspective on how a sinful

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10. Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 389.

nature corrupts our view of the divine image of *all humanity*: "If we deny one another our value, our divine nature, our humanness, our powers of contrary choice, or our human rights, then we deny the biblical doctrine of creation. So if Christians brutalise one another, we not only deny our gospel and its behavioural requirements, but we deny our divine createdness in the divine image."[11]

The most devastating impact of the Fall is that it damaged the loving relationship between God and man. Eve and Adam suffered a separation from God. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve covered themselves in shame and hid from God. Prior to the Fall, they walked and talked face to face with God (Gen 3:7-12). The Bible does not record this level of intimacy of communion with God occurring again until Moses interacts with God (Exod 33:11).

Howard Thurman describes how denying the Imago Dei of all people impacts how we treat others as less than human and more like a project:

> That is one reason why, again and again, there is no basic relationship between the simple practice of brotherhood in the commonplace relations of life and the ethical pretensions of our faith. It has long been a matter of serious moment that for decades we have studied the various peoples of the world and those who live as our neighbors as objects of missionary endeavor and enterprise without being at all willing to treat them either as brothers or as human beings.[12]

Jesus gave us two commandments to summarize all the laws and commands in the Scripture. One naturally flows out of the other as our first need is to be reconciled to God through the sacrifice of His son, Jesus. Sin is a separation, a breaking of fellowship and relationship with God. And without relationship with God, it is impossible to truly have

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11. Michael Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed For*, (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2012), 268.

12. Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, (Richmond: Friends United Press ed. 1981), 13.

relationship with humans and be obedient to the second commandment. The order of obedience to the two commandments is critically important, as explained by theologian D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his commentary on Ephesians 2:

> The whole tragedy of the modern world is due to the fact that the first is entirely left out and men think you can start with the second. But you cannot, because you are to love your neighbor as yourself, you are to love your neighbor *as you love yourself*. The problem therefore is, how am I to love myself? And according to the Bible, I shall never love myself in the right way until I see myself as I am in my relationship to God. So I cannot possibly carry out the second commandment unless I am already clear about the first.[13]

Separation of man from man is not the end, but the beginning of spiritual decline, according to Lloyd-Jones, "sin does not stop at separating men, it goes further; *sin puts men at enmity*; and not only at enmity with one another but at enmity also with God."[14] Enmity creates a self-centeredness that questions man's independence to God and is transferred to an exaggeration of self that creates enmity between men. Lloyd-Jones explains the root cause of enmity:

> The root cause of all the enmity is the pride of man; man interested in himself; man setting himself up as an autonomous being even face to face with God, and ready to listen to the question 'Hath God said?'…and it led to the Fall and all its appalling consequences. It is due to pride, self-interest, self-concern. Man sets himself up as a god. He thinks he is an autonomous being, that he has a right; he talks about his rights and his demands. That is simply a manifestation of self-interest, self-adulation, self-love, self-praise. He is constantly turning in upon himself and revolving around himself. He is the centre. He does not see that it is because he is in a wrong relationship to God, that he is in a wrong relationship to his fellow man.[15]

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13. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way of Reconciliation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983, 5th Print), 204 (*emphasis added*).

14. Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way*, 202.

15. Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way*, 202-203.

During the first century the most prevalent enmity during the early days of the church was the hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews believed for many years that they were the children of Yahweh and only accepted Gentiles into Judaism if they became Jews.[16] Christ's death on the cross was for all humanity and erased the limitations and restrictions placed on Gentiles. Paul makes this clear when he writes "Consequently, you [*Gentiles*] are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." (Eph 2:19-20).

Charles Talbert puts enmity, the manifestation of sin, in biblical perspective when he states, "biblical faith regards human disunity as having a spiritual root." Talbert goes on to support the possibility of achieving Christian unity when he writes "If it has a spiritual root, then it has a spiritual cure" which is participation in the fellowship of the Father and the Son after having believed in Jesus.[17] Christ's prayer for unity is predicated on his redeeming sacrifice on the cross thus bringing unity through relationship with the Father first and with humanity second.

Jesus prayed for unity for his disciples and for the future believers, so that the world would see God's love in action. By creating a new model for Christian relationship, Jesus knew that the disciples would demonstrate just how different his message is from all the world's strife and discord, particularly that which existed between the Jews and Gentiles. Paul emphasizes the importance of the unity of believers when he explains to the Ephesians: "And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by

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16. Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*.

17. Talbert, *Reading John*, 236.

God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:6). D.A. Carson, in his commentary on the *Gospel According to John*, writes that "the believers, still distinct, are to be one in purpose, in love, in action undertaken with and for one another, in joint submission to the revelation received."[18]

The unity of believers is further prophesied in Revelation as the way it will be in heaven. John's description of the unity of believers in heaven, is Christ's expectation for believers today: "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands." (Rev 7:9) These believers are distinguished by their nationality, ethnicity or culture but not by physical characteristics. Even in their differences, they are all recognized as part of the human race.

Christ is called the "prince of peace" because his atoning sacrifice brought peace and harmony where there was strife. "For he himself is our peace, who has made two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." (Eph 2:14) Through Christ, God has reconciled us to himself and brought the potential for peace between all men. "For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross." (Col 1:19-22)

"One of the defining characteristics of peace is unity forged between former enemies."[19] Christ obtained peace for all believers by making two groups one and by breaking down the

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18. D.A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press,1991), 568-569.

19. Grant Osborne, *Ephesians,* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2017), 65.

dividing wall. The dividing wall may have been a metaphor for the hostility between the Jews and Gentiles or Paul may have meant the divider which kept the Gentiles in the anterior of the Temple. This was a physical representation of "them" versus "us" or the Gentiles versus the Jews. Such a distinction would appear to be an insurmountable barrier, yet it was torn down by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Peace is now achieved through relationship with Christ, not through the observance of the Mosaic laws. Peace connects the concepts of unity and reconciliation. Christ repairs the broken relationships by creating harmonious relations vertically and horizontally. As one new humanity, peace is possible with God and with our fellow man. Grant Osborne, in his commentary of Ephesians, explains that "biblical peace is more than a personal sense of tranquility and well-being. It carries the idea of harmony, first with God and then with those around us."[20]

Osborne goes on to write, "[y]ou could say this is a reversal of Babel (Gen. 11), where God confused the languages and forced division on humanity because of its hubris. Now he has removed these divisions and re-created a united people."[21] Christ's ministry of peace creates something entirely new, "a single entity reconciled to God, and this peace kills something old, the enmity between humans, all made in God's image. The one, new humanity reflects the one Spirit and the Father, together with the one Lord Jesus Christ."[22] Paul confirms that Christ restored us back to the original intent at creation – that we would be one humanity, "He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between

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20. Osborne, *Ephesians,* 64.

21. Osborne, *Ephesians,* 67.

22. Lynn Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 181.

Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death" (Eph 2:15-16 NLT).

"In this a new community has been forged-the church, a new Israel, a new people of God no longer based on ethnicity but based solely on relationship with Christ. The old barriers of hostility between groups have been eradicated in the cross and both peace and unity are the result."[23] Curtiss Paul DeYoung calls this the apostle Paul's "theology of oneness."[24] DeYoung writes that "Jesus came to restore God's original intention of the essential oneness of all humanity."[25] Galatians 3:28 expresses this theology as "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ." This peace happened between the Jews and the Gentiles because they became children of God and siblings who lived in community. Confirming the importance of the how we adhere to the two commandments, D. A. Carson shares that this unity can only come from God:

> It is not achieved by hunting enthusiastically for the lowest common theological denominator, but by common adherence to the apostolic gospel, by love that is joyfully self-sacrificing, by undaunted commitment to the shared goals of the mission with which Jesus' followers have been charged, by self-conscious dependence on God himself for life and fruitfulness. It is a unity necessarily present, at least *in nuce*, amongst genuine believers; it is a unity that must be brought to perfection (v. 23).[26]

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23. Osborne, *Ephesians,* 59.

24. Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim, *United by Faith,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 153.

25. DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith,* 153.

26. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 568.

The unity was not just the removal of hostility but a proactive generation of peace. Paul emphasizes to the believers to "promote unity and peace in their relationships with one another…keep or preserve the unity and peace that Christ had already established." (Eph 4:3)

Why did Christ pray for unity? Ultimately, "Jesus mission was to glorify the Father by the cross (John 17:1-5); he yearned for his disciples to display God's glory through unity (John 17:22-24)."[27] Jesus prayed twice that the goal for this expression of unity would be "that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:14:12; 15;7) That's what Jesus really wants – that this world, which "God so loved…that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16) should *believe and know* that this is all true. Really true. Fact not fancy. History not mythology. True not false."[28] Cassidy reminds us that "All true and genuine believers are already one in Christ. The problem is simply that we don't manifest it."[29] In order for the world to believe, Carson emphasizes that the intent of "unity is meant to be observable. Not by the lowest common theological denominator but by common adherence to the apostolic creed; by love that is joyfully self-sacrificing; a unity that must be brought to perfection."[30]

Christianity is not observable and cannot bring glory to God when it claims its theological bona fides when it preaches one thing but lives out a very different reality. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass gives a vivid description of the lie of Christianity, "Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look

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27. Craig S. Keener, *Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 1061.

28. Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed*, 66.

29. Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed*, 271.

30. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 568.

upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels. The man who wields the blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus."[31]

Reconciliation Mandate

Biblical and Theological Implications

> For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault (Col 1:19-22 NLT).

Unity will be brought to perfection, by the church, through the ministry of reconciliation. "But there is no way that we can have an effective ministry of reconciliation if the church seeks to bring its contribution out of a divided community whose credibility is thereby massively compromised."[32] The church must lead the way and must, as a first step, be comfortable initiating and having a conversation about race. Cassidy helps put this in perspective when he states the role of the church: "This is a unique ministry placed upon the Christian church. It is not placed upon the government, or the army, academia, or the business world or anyone else. It is placed on ***us.***"[33]

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31. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 1976, *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail. action? docID=1832281, 184.

32. Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed*, 282.

33. Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed*, 281.

What does reconciliation mean? Grant Osborne, in his commentary on Colossians and Philemon, writes: "Reconciliation" defines the social side of salvation, speaking of establishing a relationship between two parties formerly at enmity."[34] The social aspect can be achieved through an active participation, "a change from a hostile to a friendly relationship; bringing together again, a reuniting, a re-connecting; the complete laying aside of enmity so that amity follows; and a restoration of something that was there before."[35] Christ is calling us to bring together again the completeness of humanity before the Fall. As God created one race, Christ is reuniting mankind into one humanity reflective of God. Osborne describes the Christian goal of unity: "God especially intends for us to become models of racial and ethnic harmony, and that Christ and the Spirit are at work in God's people to achieve just that."[36]

There was always hostility between Israel and surrounding nations. God gave the commandments to the Jews to be set apart as an example to the Gentiles. Instead, the Jews believed that they alone were worthy to be called the children of God. Lloyd-Jones describes this as the source of enmity between Jews and Gentiles "God did divide up the world into two groups, and he did give these commandments {of ceremonial laws}. But He did not do it in order to create enmity; He did it in order that the children of Israel might bear witness to Him and to His holy laws and to the way of salvation. But they, because of the principle of sin and of self and selfishness, interpreted God's act in such a manner as to say, 'We, and we alone, are the

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34. Grant Osborne, Colossians & Philemon: Verse by Verse, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 45.

35.Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way*, 225.

36. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse,* 69.

people, and those others are dogs, they are scarcely human beings at all.'"[37] The Gospel unity addressed the overarching issue of ethnic disunity. C. Leslie Mitton states that the gospel union "is far stronger than their former separateness on racial grounds."[38] Christ understood that a unity rooted in love and expressed in shared community could create a relationship stronger than the differences they saw in their diversity.

As Osborne observes, "The racial and ethnic divides are gone, replaced by "one new man" and thus forged by Christ into "one body".[39] "The unity between enemy people groups has been accomplished only in Christ and by Christ, who has "put to death their hostility" toward one another."[40] Unity of believers is demonstrated when believers can come together, listen to one another, acknowledge the truth of pain and injustice, and work together to improve the situation for the benefit of all. Christ is clear that Christian unity must be held in truth. "And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth." (John 17:19) Truth is also a call to remember (Deut 6:9-12) and a passing down of the truth of history (Deut 6:20-24). Truth is more than just relational fellowship. Truth is acknowledging the sinful behavior of the past and listening to how that behavior still exists through systems of injustice. How we treat one another as believers shows how we value, respect and love our God. The discriminatory behavior toward other minorities, and especially toward Blacks in America, by white, evangelical Christians is an affront to God. Individual and systematic racism has created

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37. Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way*, 209.

38. C. Leslie Mitton, Ephesians, *New Century Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Repr. 1989) https://www.dropbox.com/s/h2uljuvosnrjl4n/Ephesians%2C%20C.%20Leslie%20Mitton%2C%20827591111%2C%20444.pdf?dl=0, 101.

39. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse,* 67.

40. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse,* 68.

a chasm in the Christian church. White Christians do not hear the suffering of their Black brothers and sisters and as a result, the world sees discord and fractured relationships in the church instead of unity. True unity would be reflected in the love of the Father for the Son, manifested in the love between Christians who previously have been at odds and even hostile to one another.

"The social unity of God's people is a fragile blessing, easily pulled and too often rent by our other allegiances. If we allow any other social allegiance – to culture, ethnicity, social status, gender, political party, or the like – to shatter our common unity in Christ, we cannot rightly call him Lord."[41] "If you start with the second commandment it will lead to disaster, because man is not merely an intellect, he is not merely a social being. According to scripture, there is an evil principle at work in him; he is infected by sin, he is in a diseased condition. And before you begin to train him you must heal him. He needs a new life."[42] So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:16-21).

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41. Keener, *Galatians*, 165.

42. Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way*, 204.

This new life must be manifested by a changed behavior. In Ephesians 4:2-4, the apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesians to recognize that now that they are Christians in belief and experience and therefore, they should be Christians in behavior: "Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Paul knows that reconciliation can be transformative. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Cor 5:17) Guthrie, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians, questions the Christian true reconciliation with God when he states "Thus, that some of the Corinthians are still not fully reconciled to Paul manifests a turbulence in their relationship with God, and that fact *might* indicate that they do not have a relationship with God at all."[43]

A change in behavior is demonstrated through a change in attitude, state of mind and behavior. J. Daniel Hays, drawing his analogy of how we must treat one another from Proverbs 14:31 and 17:5, states that the oppression of others because of race is the same as showing contempt for God, the creator of all human beings. "All people of all races are created in God's image and therefore deserve to be treated with dignity and respect."[44]

Cornelius Plantinga, writing on why God hates sin, states: "Biblically instructed Christians now know that a racist state of mind is wholly wrong, an offense to the aggrieved race

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43. George H. Guthrie. 2 Corinthians, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.* Edited by Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 312.

44. Hays, *From Every People*, 50-51.

and an offense to God. Racism is a breach of shalom and, seemingly, an excellent example of sin."[45]

The ministry of reconciliation requires Christians to tell the world they can be reconciled to God through Christ. In this ministry, we become the ambassadors of Christ, bringing unity to the world, as though God were making his appeal through us. The unity of one human race is fulfilled as we learn to listen to one another; share mutual responsibility for our sin and seek to overcome the injustices of racism, both individually and systemically, which has kept us separated as Christians. This divine calling is repeated throughout Scripture "as believers we are all people "who share in a heavenly call" (Heb 3:1), as "ambassadors" (2 Cor 5:20), as "soldiers" (2 Tim 2:3) and as "heavenly citizens" (Phil 3:20)."[46]

God has entrusted us to tell others about his message of salvation. An ambassador does not represent himself, but rather the one who sends him. Unlike secular ambassadors who are given great honor and respect, Christian ambassadors represent Christ and are expected to be servant leaders. In order to represent Christ, we must remember that we are citizens of heaven (John 18:36) and strive to be obedient to the commandments of Christ. Cohick, commenting on the apostle Paul's writing states: "He insists that the church build unity by acting with patience, humility, and lovingkindness toward their fellow believers (Eph 4:2-3)." [47] By emulating the love of Christ, we will be able to share the good news of the gospel and be bridge builders of reconciliation.

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45. Plantinga, *Not the Way It's,* 24.

46. Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed*, 285.

47. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians,* 182.

This demonstration of unity becomes the most important part of the Christian witness, and the ministry of reconciliation is the way in which unity is brought to perfection. If humanity cannot trust God to change the hearts of those who call him Father, how will they trust him to provide for their eternal salvation? "Words may be necessary for evangelism, but they will ring hollow if love is not characteristic of those who speak of Jesus Christ. The Christian church community needs to reflect and repent of everything that destroys this unity in love for which Jesus prayed."[48]

David Rensberger describes how unity functions evangelistically within the Christian community by presenting a challenge to the evil in the world that divides: "Christianity presents a challenge to the world's violence and injustice, its oppression, greed, and divisiveness. Among those who profess the kinship of Jesus, the world's idolatrous chauvinisms – of nation, race, gender, or otherwise – are dissolved."[49] The evangelistic purpose of unity is to demonstrate a credible witness to the world that Jesus is capable of healing the brokenness and disrupting the hostility. When prior enemies come together because of the love of Christ, the compelling story is who Jesus is, not what man has done.

Reconciliation through unity is the perfect foundation for the multi-ethnic church that "brings all people together into a new group, where no single culture, language, or political entity

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48. Karen Kobes Du Mez*, John Through Old Testament Eyes*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 258.

49. David Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), https://www.dropbox.com/s/20u6sy8fd4xkbbs/Johannine%20faith%20and%20 liberating%20community.%20David%20Rensberger.%2017805573.%20626.1.pdf?dl=0, 150.

is privileged over another. This is a unity of differences, not a union of sameness. Here in this new body, all are equally beloved by the Father, as members of the body of his Son."[50]

Multi-ethnic Church Mandate

Biblical and Theological Implications

A multi-ethnic church has been described as a church in which there exists a non-majority, collective population of at least 20 percent.[51] A multi-ethnic church has the potential to demonstrate the perfection of Christian unity and testifies to God's original plan of salvation for all of humanity and the power of the gospel. Harry Li, co-founder of Mosaic Church in Arkansas, says it this way "I believe that the unity of diverse believers walking, working, and worshipping God together as one is at the very heart and center of God's desire for the local church. This unity testifies to the power of the gospel to break through the dividing walls of ethnic segregation, hatred, and animosity that are still so evident in our world today."[52]

The sin of the Fall started the separation of humanity from one people to fragmented tribes and nations and was further expanded by the construct of race. God prophesied one redeemer that would save all of humanity (Gen 3:15). While the biblical world was essentially divided between the Jews and the Gentiles (anyone not a Jew), scripture is clear that God intended to bring salvation to all of humanity. God called out the Israelites to be his special people and to serve as a model to the rest of the world (Gen 22:18). God's plan was that through their worship and obedience, other nations would come to know the one true God. (Gen 12:3)

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50. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians,* 189.

51. DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith,* 10.

52. Mark DeYmaz and Harry Li, *Ethnic Blends*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 31.

God entered into the Abrahamic covenant to bring salvation to the world through Abraham's seed (Gen 12:1-3). The covenant promises blessing and redemption which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer who will one day "restore everything" (Acts 3:21).

Throughout the Old Testament we see how God has included non-Jews in his plan for salvation. An early example is the exodus from Egypt where the Bible says: "A rabble of non-Israelites went with them, along with great flocks and herds of livestock." (Exod 12:38) John Gill, along with other commentators, describes this group as a mixed multitude of "Egyptians, and some of other nations that had resided in Egypt, and who, on various accounts, might choose to go along with the children of Israel; some through intermarriages with them, being loathe to part with their relations."[53]

Other Old Testament examples where God blessed and included multi-ethnic interactions are: Moses, a Jew, takes a Cushite for a wife and is criticized by his sister and brother. (Num 12:1) Cush was in the southern Nile River valley and the Cushites were dark skinned Africans. Contrary to the view of western readers, the Cushites were not considered inferior because of their color but were, in fact, respected as highly skilled warriors. While there is historically a belief that the criticism against Moses was because of racial prejudice, E. Randolph Richards suggests that because the Hebrews were known as a slave race, the criticism "is more likely that Miriam and Aaron thought Moses was being presumptuous by marrying *above* himself."[54] Whether the prejudice stemmed from color or socioeconomic status, God clearly supported

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53. John Gill, *Gill's Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/exodus/12.htm.

54. E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 61.

Moses' choice in his selection of a non-Jewish wife and disciplined Aaron and Miriam for their judgmental nature.

Other examples of Gentiles added to the Israelite community include Ruth, the Moabitess (Ruth 1:22) who went on to father Obed, the grandfather of King David; Rahab, the Canaanite woman who saved the spies who were reconnoitering Jericho, (Josh 2:9-13) and is the father of Boaz, the great, great father of King David (Matt 1:1-11).

In the New Testament, as early as the birth of Christ, God used Gentile magicians and astrologers (wisemen) from the far east in his plan to celebrate Jesus' birth and spread the word that the Messiah, also foreshadowed Jesus inclusion of Gentiles in the salvation of humanity. (Matt 2:1-2) Jesus' miracles and teaching moments were not limited to Jews. When a Roman military leader asked him to heal his servant, Jesus used the opportunity to extend grace to a Gentile and to demonstrate the importance of faith. (Luke 7;1-10); Jesus healed the demoniac possessed Gentile (Mark 5:2); healed the Syrophoenician woman (Matt 15:22; Mark 7:26); and fed the 4,000 Gentiles in the Decapolis. (Mark 8:1-10)

The model for the multi-ethnic church is clearly seen in the early church at Antioch. In Acts 13:1, Luke describes the leaders "of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul." Mark DeYmaz highlights the diversity of the Antioch pastoral leadership team that "included two men from Africa, one from the Mediterranean, one from Asia Minor, and one from the Middle East, providing the church a visible witness and a model of unity at the highest level. With these things in mind, it's not coincidental that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). For there, Christ was clearly recognized in the midst of unity, just as he had said he would be 'I am in them and you are in me. May they

experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.' (John 17:23)."[55]

The multi-ethnic church, God's kingdom on earth, should be as diverse as it will be in heaven. "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands" (Rev 7:9). As Osborne reflects, "it does mean that God especially intends for us to become models of racial and ethnic harmony, and that Christ and the Spirit are at work in God's people to achieve just that."[56]

Cohick points out that unity is not homogeneity, but about appreciating and valuing the full person. "Unity necessitates that differences remain; otherwise, one has not unity, but sameness. The unity produced in Christ, celebrates difference, and the diversity is not asymmetrical in terms of power……all the saints are aware that God shows no favoritism (Eph 4:6-9). Their unity should undercut their social hierarchies. The rejection of favoritism helps us understand the type of unity Paul desires - it is not about creating uniformity but about renouncing cultural privilege."[57] Unity should reflect the differences as God created us. Through those differences we get to experience the full spectrum of God as we reflect Him.

The beauty of diversity is described like a beautiful garden by Rev. W. Frank Scott in his homiletic commentary:

> The Church is likened in Old Testament allegory to an Eastern Garden. In such a garden there is the widest diversity; but that detracts neither from its beauty nor its usefulness.

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55. DeYmaz and Li, *Ethnic Blends*, 42.

56. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse,* 69.

57. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians,* 182.

> Each has its place, and the garden is richer and more beautiful for the diversity. As the plants and trees do not envy or grieve at each other in the garden, but each fulfils its own place and function,….so should it be in the Church of Christ, to the glory and praise of God.[58]

Paul's theology of oneness did not encourage "the loss of one's own culture of origin, or assimilation into another group's culture."[59] Paul, in discussing the uniqueness of Christians, confirms that Jews are not expected to be Gentiles, nor Gentiles expected to be Jews. The multi-ethnic church must represent the diversity among humankind without sacrificing the uniqueness of how God made each person. Cohick expands upon the concept that the failure of unity is to forsake being grounded in and recognize the many differences among God's creation. "There is an inaccurate belief that unity equals sameness…unity depends upon different persons coming together. Sadly, the resistance to unity finds its safe harbor in personal, familial, and ethnic peculiarities that barricade itself from others."[60]

Redemptive Leadership Mandate

Biblical and Theological Implications

"Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies." (Ps 107:2 NLT) Redemption refers to the salvation work of Christ and its effect for humanity. Christ came to give his life to redeem us from the death we deserve because of our sin (Titus 2:14). The redemption offered by Christ is a release from "the bondage to which sin

58. W. Frank Scott, *The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 490.

59. DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith,* 155.

60. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians,* 187.

consigns people in its guilt, defilement, power, and liability."[61] This bondage can influence the heart of a leader and directly impact his or her ability to lead. Sooner or later, crisis can impact a leader, derailing them from achieving the kind of success they once envisioned for their life and leaving them feeling like a failure and in a state of brokenness.[62]

Humanity is broken because of our sinfulness which is an offense against God. Plantinga describes sin as a distortion of our character, our very humanity, which breaks the covenant with our Savior.[63] We give offense to God when we choose our own will over what God has ordained. Brokenness has manifest itself by the inability (or perhaps resistance) of white, evangelical Christians to know how to lament with Black Christians over the racism that is pervasive in America. This brokenness leaves unity fractured as white, evangelical Christians do not know what to say, so they say nothing, remain in denial and fail to show compassion to their Black and Brown brothers and sisters. Christ is calling his followers to perfect unity by going against the myths and the stories told by the secular world to show lovingkindness to others, whether they are like us or not. Going against the grain of society is exactly what Christ calls us to do. To be in relationship with God and unity with our brothers and sisters, we must willingly and with love do that which God calls us to do more than engage in the strife and discord that continues hostility in the world (Mic 6:8).

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61. John Murray, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (ed.), *Redeemer; Redemption*, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 4, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 62.

62. Rodney L. Cooper, Kenneth and Jean Hansen Professor of Discipleship and Leadership Development at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, "Redemptive Leadership", (Lecture, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, October 2019).

63. Plantinga, *Not the Way It's,* 2, 12.

Robert Clinton has good news for the leader who is experiencing brokenness: "As a leader, you should recognize that God is continually developing you over a lifetime. His top priority is to conform you to the image of Christ for ministry with spiritual authority. Enduring fruitfulness flows out of being."[64] There is good news, even in brokenness because God consistently uses failure and brokenness to build his kingdom here on earth.

Christ is our model for redemptive leadership. He is known as the Redeemer-Servant because of his emphasis on redeeming those that society may judge and cast aside and his sacrificial service to others against the norms of society (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). "Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2:13-14).

God is never done with us; failure does not have to define our journey, and no matter how often we fall or how deep the chasm, God can redeem us. "Redemption [of ourselves or others] must not be viewed as just an event but as a different paradigm, a different operating system, based on God's heart."[65] The bondage of the old sinful nature is transformed by God's redemptive work.

The writers of the Old and New Testament provide us with numerous examples of redemptive leaders throughout the Bible. God redeemed David after he committed adultery and had Uriah sent to the front of the battle lines to be killed. David repented and learned that by listening to and obeying God, he could be a just king. David's failure demonstrates how God can redeem something good from failure. David failed miserably, and failure had its

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64. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 45.

65. Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, 120-121.

consequences, but God redeemed him and out of his lineage came the Messiah. "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives" (John 12:24).

God redeemed Rahab from a scandalous reputation to being a hero in God's plan to capture Jericho. God accepted Rahab's belief in and commitment to serving Him and redeemed her from sure death as the walls of Jericho fell (Josh 2).

God redeemed Paul from being a persecutor of Christians to arguably, being one of the greatest apostles. Paul is an example of how God can use all of our experiences, the positive and the negative, redemptively. Paul was a Roman citizen, educated by elite teachers and used his privilege and intellect to persecute Christians; but God redeemed him by showing him truth and allowing him to be the messenger of salvation to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13-14).

Redemptive leaders can also be used by God to provide hope through leadership. Abigail, as a first century woman, was relegated to a subordinate position of preparation of meals or managing household staff. Yet she was redeemed by God to be in a position to exercise wise counsel in the face of her husband's foolishness. Her husband Nathan could have had her killed for disobeying him but she saw the opportunity to mend the relationship with King David and risked her personal safety for the greater good of her household (1 Sam 25).

Jonathan demonstrated redemptive leadership when he went against his father Saul's desire to kill David when he had done nothing wrong. Jonathan was redeemed from the false narrative of lies even when it was not convenient or personally safe (1 Sam 19:4).

Asa was a good king of Judah who acted as redemptive leader and went against what society, or even his own family, wanted in order to serve the Lord. God redeemed him from a generational bondage of sin. He did not follow after his father or grandfather and instituted

changes to glorify God. He even went so far as to "depose his grandmother from her position as queen mother" and stripped her of her royal duties because she did not honor God (1 Kgs 15:11-24).

God can work redemptively and powerfully in and through our failures and shortcomings. The apostle Paul recounts his conversation with God when he asked for his torment to be taken away: "Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me." (2 Cor 12:9) Cooper describes the importance of brokenness in redemptive leaders: "Redemptive Leaders not only unleash men and women to fulfill their calling – they reclaim them and show that even failure is never wasted. Redemptive leaders model that God doesn't use you IN SPITE of who you are – He uses you BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE."[66]

God calls us to grow and develop, particularly in the areas of moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, patient endurance and brotherly love for everyone.

> In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.
>
> The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins (2 Pet 1:5-9).

And when we do so, we become more like Christ, unified and able to be his witness to the world. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge

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66. Cooper, "Redemptive Leadership" Lecture, (emphasis added).

of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ (Eph 4:13). As we know better, we must be proactive in doing better. Our growth is important to the redeeming work God will do in transforming our heart. Christ calls us to not "just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like" (Jas 1:22-24). Christianity is called to be the community redeemed by Christ and called away from the sinful nature of society.

In order to be the unified community Christ called us to be, redemptive leaders must experience a transformation of heart. Powers explains that "transformation involves an inward work of the heart, which then works its way outward into our thoughts, behavior, and mindset. Through transformation we become different at our core and then cannot help but think and behave differently."[67]

Redemptive leaders in Scripture demonstrate this transformation. God redeemed Moses after he committed murder and fled to Midian. Moses was redeemed from his own sense of self-importance thinking he could change the plight of the Jews. He experienced a change of heart and humility that allowed him to truly love the children of Israel and to recognize that only as an agent of God could he make a difference.

God redeemed Peter from failure after he denied Christ to become a great evangelist. Peter's fear caused him to fail in the eyes of the public and the other disciples, yet God redeemed him by showing him that his heart of devotion to Christ was truly greater than his fear. God

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67. Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, 88.

showed Peter that He could use him to be a successful evangelist who preached and converted thousands at a time.

It would appear that the prime directive for redemptive leaders is reconciliation—which is the essence of the gospel message. Humanity is not just getting saved but having an internal change of heart that converts them to a new person.

Summary

Scripture gives us context to consider several important mandates to follow when we look at how to model a conversation on race. First, we note that we are all made in the image of God and therefore, one human race. Second, we know that the Fall created a sinful divide that has manifest itself in hostility between people groups, particularly Black Christians and white, evangelical Christians in America. Third, we know that Christ has charged us with perfecting unity as the body of Christ so that through our witness, people will know the power of the God we serve. Fourth, the redemptive work of Christ has application in all that we do as broken people who have been redeemed to serve and lead others. Redemptive leaders are called to create a community that includes all of the diversity of God's design. We must be in right relationship with God as we acknowledge truth, live with moral excellence, and exhibit brotherly love through a transformational change of heart.

"Biblically instructed Christians now know that a racist state of mind is wholly wrong, an offense to the aggrieved race and an offense to God."[68] A change of heart can lead to a reconciliation unparalleled in history simply by following the biblical mandates. As ambassadors for Christ, we must seek deep, radical transformational change and not grow

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69. Plantinga, *Not the Way It's,* 24.

content with seeking acceptance form the world. "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (Rom 12:2) Most of all, we must actively experience this spiritual transformation so that "we might catalyze and guide the transformation of others."[69]

70. Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, 114.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There is significant literature which addresses the lack of unity within the church, particularly between white, evangelical and Black Christians. Over the past several years there have been numerous books and articles published which explore the racial division caused and exacerbated by the white, evangelical church within America.

Many scholars and practitioners have contributed to the discussion by providing unique perspectives of the underlying reasons the church is not united nor reconciled. For the purpose of this literature review, I will focus on the theological differences between the formation of white, evangelical Christianity and Black Christianity; the development of our present day "wall of hostility"; the failure of the historical attempts, both secular and Christian, at reconciliation; the rise and decline of the multi-ethnic church and the potential for redemptive leadership to address the challenge that the church is uniquely positioned to resolve.

This chapter will review literature which primarily refer to the Black-white divide because, as Emerson notes, "the gulf between American blacks and whites is generally more vast and the history longer in comparison to others." Race relations scholar Thomas Pettigrew notes that "Black Americans constitute a unique minority not only in the United States but in the world at large."[1] This uniqueness is due to their belonging to American society but yet their lack of acceptance and inclusion. Pettigrew describes their inclusion as one of right due to the fact that

1. Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Integration and Pluralism," *Eliminating Racism: Profiles in Controversy*, ed. Phyllis A. Katz and Dalmas A. Taylor, (New York: Plenum Press), 1988, 23,https://archive.org/details/eliminatingracis0000unse_l6z2/page/n10/mode/2up.

"[t]heir arrival in Virginia in 1619 predates all but Indian Americans and the earliest British settlers. They are neither immigrants nor aliens. Nor are they a colonized people in the full sense. The tragedy of American racial history, then, is that black people were both accepted as belonging and yet racially denied their full rights as citizens."[2]

The current context of race relations in the United States has highlighted the expanding, negative impact of racism on all people of color. Additionally, from an eschatological perspective, it is critically important that the multi-ethnic church take into consideration the diversity of all people, culturally and socioeconomically, as representative of the kingdom of God. Finally, I will review the importance of redemptive leaders to lead with cultural competence for transformative outcomes.

Unity: Why It Has Failed

Origin of the Present Day 'Wall of Hostility'

Slavery has been called the original sin of America. It is the present day "wall of hostility" that has been around for over 400 years, since the first enslaved people were brought to America in 1619. History records that the church has been deeply complicit in the approval and justification of slavery. Jones chronicles the rise of violence against African Americans and the "conspicuous absence of religious opposition" and concludes with this statement: "White Christianity has been many things in America. [I]t has also been the primary institution legitimizing and propagating white power and dominance."[3]

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2. Pettigrew, *Eliminating Racism*, 23.

3. Jones, "Remembering: Christianity as the Conductor of White Supremacy," in *White Too Long*, 25-71.

Christian belief in the inferiority of African enslaved people was accepted in America until the conflict between evangelism and slavery was advanced by Quaker abolitionists in the late 1800s. It was not until abolitionists started questioning the congruence of saving a man's soul and holding him as a slave for life did white Christians start to question the veracity of their beliefs. Quakers viewed the concept of saving souls but relegating them to a lifetime of bondage as at odds to biblical teaching. Southern slaveholders, in an effort to preserve the status quo, were successful in receiving a ruling from the Anglican Bishop that embracing the Christian religion was beneficial to caste off the "heathenism" but did not result in change in enslavement status.

Emerson explains how the church was complicit in using Christianity as a weapon to enforce control of the enslaved:

> Not only did Christianity make slaves better slaves, they [the clergy] argued, it did not in any way hinder owners from using whatever means necessary to obtain compliance. The church allowed any degree of "strictness and severity" necessary to maintain mastery. Whether their slaves were baptized or not, owners had the authority to determine the necessary punishment in instances of insubordination.[4]

The Revolutionary War sowed seeds of change that brought greater tension to the concept of slavery. "The rhetoric and ideology used to muster support for the revolutionary war−both political and theological−made American slavery itself seem problematic to many."[5] Eric Foner, offers this explanation: "[T]here had been a big campaign in the 1780s, 1790s on both sides of the Atlantic, which identified the African slave trade as what we would call today, a

4. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 24.

5. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith,* 27.

violation of human rights, a crime against humanity."[6] The slave trade was abolished in Great Britain in 1807 and slavery abolished in 1830. By 1808 slave importation was abolished in the United States, however, slave trade within America became a big economic engine for states like Virginia. With the abolition of the importation of slaves the abolitionist movement declined somewhat and slavery in America continued for another 50 years.[7]

The tensions surrounding the continuation of slavery came to a head, within religious circles, in 1844 at the Baptist Triennial Convention when a request was made to affirm the compatibility of the southern slaveholding tradition with Christianity. A pastor from Alabama specifically asked if slaveholders were eligible for all the rights and privileges held by non-slaveholding members within the convention. The board sent back a swift and responding answer "If any one [*sic*] should offer himself as a missionary, having slaves, and should insist on retaining them as his property, we could not appoint him. One thing is certain: we can never be a party to any arrangement that would imply approbation of slavery."[8] Six months later the Southern Baptist Convention was born and, in its constitution, stated its support of the future Confederacy by replacing, in its constitution, the United States with "the Southern States of North America."

Anthea Butler describes how the Bible was used to support slavery: "Churches remain true to the social structures of the regions they lived in, and their leaders found scriptures to

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6. Michel Martin, "End of Slave Trade Meant New Normal for America," *National Public Radio*, Tell Me More, January 10, 2008, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17988106.

7. Martin, *End of Slave Trade*.

8. Long, *White Too Long*, 2.

buttress those social structures. Biblical mandates were found to support the system of slavery, including the economics of the practice, and to be a repository for a morality constructed on the dubious value of slaveholding and southern morals as a marker of "true civilization."[9] Historian Charles Regan Wilson called the protection of the religious and cultural values of the slaveholding South the "Religion of the Lost Cause."[10] Butler describes the Lost Cause as the intersection of southern values, Christianity and the brutality to sustain it: "By creating a history where the brutality and suffering of black people was ignored in favor of promoting southern life and chivalry, the Lost Cause essentially turned the states of the former Confederacy into defenders of a noble ideal rather than just violent secessionists that had defied the Union."[11]

Esau McCaulley discusses how this false testimony about God was similar to Satan's use of scripture in the wilderness, "The problem isn't that the scriptures that Satan quoted were untrue, but when made to do the work that he wanted them to do, they distorted the biblical witness."[12] Scripture was used to support and sustain a variety of pro slavery arguments. "The Bible, the defenders argued, does not oppose slavery and in fact, by direct and indirect precept, supports it."[13]

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9. Anthea Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, (Chapel Hill: Ferris and Ferris, 2021), 23.

10. Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl /reader.action?docID=3039073.

11. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 23-24.

12. Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2020), 91.

13. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith,* 34.

Christians supported slavery and many owned slaves themselves. "In fact, in the year before the Methodist split, 25,000 members owned 208,000 slaves; 1,200 Methodist clergy were slaveholders. From 1846 until the Civil War, every man who achieved the rank of Bishop within the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was a slaveholder."[14] Slavery was inexplicably woven into the fabric of white, evangelical Christianity. James Cone, quotes Pierre Burton who Cone describes as 'put[ting] it mildly':

> In... the racial struggle, there's revealed the same pattern of tardiness, apathy, non-commitment, and outright opposition by the church... indeed, the history of the race struggle in the United States has been to a considerable extent the history of the Protestant rapport with the status quo. From the beginning, it was the church that put its blessing on slavery and sanctioned a caste system that continues to this day.[15]

In her historical book reviewing America's system of racial hierarchy, Isabel Wilkerson writes that a caste system is " an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups based on the basis of ancestry and often immutable traits, traits that would be neutral in the abstract but ascribed life-and-death meaning."[16] She goes on to describe how the caste system was brought to America:

> "More than a century and a half before the American Revolution, a human hierarchy had evolved…..[in] the Unites States….It would twist the minds of men as greed and self-reverence eclipsed human conscience…they decided they would need to conquer, enslave, or remove the people to extract the wealth….to justify their plans, they took preexisting notions of their own centrality, reinforced by their self-interested interpretation of the Bible…[and transported] African captives to build the New World

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14. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 36.

15. Cone, *Black Theology*, 82, quoting Pierre Benton, *The Comfortable Pew* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippinscott, 1965), 28-29.

16. Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent*, (New York: Random House, 2020), 17.

and to serve the victors for all their days, one generation after the next, for twelve generations."[17]

As the United States grew, the gospel was used by white Christians to exert social control to maintain the economic foundation of the American colonies. Historian Lester Scherer confirms the Christian participation and dependency on free labor: "Ministers often felt the need to have slaves in their own households and sometimes found them provided by thoughtful congregations as part of the parsonage furnishings."[18] White ministers and commoners alike "became as convinced as Fontaine [a minister in Charles City, Va.] of the need for slaves, so that a deep feeling of the misery of life without enslaved blacks often provided the hidden premise of theological and ethical statements about slavery."[19]

Emerson points out that "nearly 100 years of working for abolition through changed hearts and voluntary means failed. Likewise, arguments showing slavery's consistency with the Christian mission convinced few Northerners."[20] The only way to resolve the slavery issue would end up being through Civil War, the deadliest of all American wars. While it is unclear as to the exact number of deaths; it has been reported at 618,222, and could be as high as 750,000.[21]

Race relations between white and Black within the religious community did not begin to change until after the Emancipation Proclamation extended freedom to enslaved people in 1865.

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17. Wilkerson, *Caste*, 23.

18. Lester Scherer, *Slavery and the Churches in Early America, 1619-1819*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1974, https://archive.org/details/slaverychurchesi0000sche/page/n8/mode/2up, 64.

19. Lester Scherer, *Slavery and the Churches,* 64.

20. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 37.

21. Bob Zeller, *How Many Died in the American Civil War?* History, https://www.history.com/news/american-civil-war-deaths, Accessed February 4, 2022.

While white and Blacks worshipped together, there was still segregation, with Blacks being relegated to the balcony area. "Denied equal participation in the existing churches," Emerson notes that "after the war, before the formal institution of Jim Crow segregation, African Americans in frustration left the white churches in mass to form their own churches."[22] One noted example was the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The AME Church grew out of the Free African Society (FAS) which Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others established in Philadelphia in 1787. When officials at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church pulled blacks off their knees while praying, FAS members discovered just how far American Methodists would go to enforce racial discrimination against African Americans. Hence, these members of St. George's made plans to transform their mutual aid society into an African congregation.[23]

Many of the white Christians saw the separation of worship as a positive especially as such relational interactions could result in the possibility of the great taboo of interracial marriages. One Virginia pastor, recognizing that separation was counter to Christ's prayer for unity, provided a rationalization when he said "No Christian ought to allow his conscience to be disturbed by the thought that he violates the unity of the church by insisting on an independent organization for the colored race. The distinctions are drawn by God himself."[24]

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22. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 39.

23. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, *Our History*, https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/, Accessed February 2, 2022.

24. David M. Reimers, *White Protestantism and the Negro*, New York: (Oxford University Press, 1965), https://archive.org/details/whiteprotestanti1965reim/page/33/mode/1up?q=conscience, 33.

The period from 1865 to the Civil Rights Act of 1965 was tumultuous and filled with violence, segregation, and separation. Anthea Butler describes the participation of Christian churches in the terror and violence: "Evangelical Christians and churches engaged in lynchings, attending and cheering brutal spectacles of murder, enacted upon black bodies."[25] The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and "the southern right of human sacrifice" [lynching] constituted bringing back what white Southerners considered their God given right of white men to rule over all."[26] Historian Donald Mathews confirms the fundamental essence of this violence when he writes: "religion did not cause lynching. Rather, lynching was *itself* religion."[27] Lynchings were not just racial violence. They were a ritual of Christian human sacrifice, justified by the Bible and endorsed by white Christianity. "Christianity was the primary lens through which most southerners conceptualized and made sense of suffering and death of any sort," writes historian Amy Louise Wood "It would be inconceivable that they could inflict pain and torment on the bodies of black men without imagining that violence as a religious act, laden with Christian symbolism and significance."[28]

Whites and Blacks moved further apart even as they learned to live with each other. The violence of the Jim Crow era gave way to systemic barriers which led the National Advisory

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25. Butler, *White Evangelical*, 30.

26. Butler, *White Evangelical*, 28-29.

27. Donald G. Mathews, *At the Altar of Lynching: Burning Sam Hose in the American South*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 2.

28. Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940*,(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 2009, https://archive.org/details/lynchin_woo_2009_00_4164/mode/2up, 48.

Commission on Civil Disorders to report in 1968 that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white − separate and unequal."[29]

"Evangelicals quest to win the world for Christ − a quest promoted by a white male leadership, exemplified by [Billy] Graham − was to save souls and make believers of all races conform to white, Western Christian ideals. Their quest helped dramatically to solidify for postwar America the racism that was embedded in evangelical beliefs, behaviors, and social prohibitions from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."[30] Evangelical activity picked up Martin Luther King's vision to reconcile the races in the late 1960s and started to implement its own version. In such organizations like Promise Keepers, the popular version for white evangelicals was to embrace the individual component. They stressed developing friendships and relationships with people of color. The individual component left the larger social structures, institutions, and culture intact.[31]

The separation of people into groups continued as white churches adopted the homogeneous unit principle. David Swanson describes the principle as "the rationale for starting churches of demographically similar people. This principle states that it is easier for people to become Christians when they must cross few or no racial, linguistic, or class barriers. Ideally, then, these new churches were led by pastors whose culture, class, and skin color closely

29. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 48.

30. Butler, *White Evangelicals*, 34.

31. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 51-52.

matched those of their flocks."[32] Swanson argues this trend, while waning, is still common as church planters try to find the "category" of people to target for their church plant.

In the spring of 1993, when the Rodney King verdict came down and the riots occurred, evangelical churches decided to come together "to hold what they called a "Love LA" service to heal the racial and social wounds of the city. It was to be a healing celebration, a chance for racial reconciliation. Prayers, it seemed, would permeate most of the other major efforts at racial reconciliation in the 1990s."[33] When it came to racial reconciliation, evangelicals wanted individual relationships and prayer to provide the balm the nation needed to heal. Collective behavior or change of behavior was not needed to fix the race problem. Conversely, when it came to changing the nation, evangelicals wanted to coalesce the collective power of the "Moral Majority" to bring America back to the Christian nation it believed itself to be. Kristen Kobes Du Mez states that Jerry Falwell, in his 1980 primer on the politics of the religious right stated that the time had come "to reclaim the country from a "vocal minority of ungodly men and women."[34]

"Up to the 2000s, evangelicals had cloaked themselves in morality, respectability, and power. The racism that underlay their religious movement could be waved away through belief, theology, and denial."[35] Now, the white, evangelical movement is more aligned with politics and

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32. David Swanson, "Down with the homogeneous unit principle?", *Christianity Today*, August 20, 2010, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2010/august-online-only/down-with-homogeneous-unit-principle.html.

33. Butler, *White Evangelicals*, 89-91.

34. Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 96.

35. Butler, *White Evangelicals*, 98-99.

power. Butler describes how evangelical sin has changed from "an American Christianity born in the context of Christian slaveholders…[that] sanctified and justified segregation, violence, and racial proscription." to "[r]acism" that is not only "about individual sin…[but also] about the corporate sins of a religious movement that continues to believe itself good, and that good is predicated on whiteness and the proximity to power."[36]

Five significant events occurred which started to uncover the breadth and depth of the white, evangelical Christian "wall of hostility". First, the 9/11 attack on the United States launched a "racialization through phenotype and dress [that] became a standard denigration of Muslims by evangelical leaders, writers and clergy."[37] Second, in 2005, Hurricane Katrina became a turning point for "evangelicals' political, moral, and theological concerns [which came] together to create a harsh, uncaring posture towards suffering and disaster."[38] Third, was the election of Barack Obama in 2008. The attacks on him were based on misinformation challenging his "legitimacy, not his competency." Fourth, Butler describes how the desire for political power have influenced white evangelicals to abandon morality: "[b]y 2016, they were willing to embrace a man devoid of the morality evangelicals have preached about, written about, and enforced, in order to retain it. Finally, class and wealth have encouraged evangelicals to hold onto racism tightly as part of their beliefs about capitalism, God, and the nation."[39]

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36. Butler, *White Evangelicals*, 138.

37. Butler, *White Evangelicals*, 108-109.

38. Butler, *White Evangelicals*, 111.

39. Butler, *White Evangelicals*, 141-142.

White Christianity Formation

Historian David Bebbington's definition of evangelical has been accepted by many as a good starting point to understand white, evangelical Christian spiritual formation. He outlines four pillars:

- Conversionism: the belief that lives need to be transformed through a "born-again" experience and a lifelong process of following Jesus.
- Activism: the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts.
- Biblicism: the high regard for an obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority.
- Cruciscentrism: a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity.[40]

Evangelicals are individualistic in their thought process and perspective. The theological underpinning of white homogenous churches stressed the individual relationship with Christ. This individualist attitude makes it difficult for white evangelicals to take responsibility for the collective sins of their predecessors. "Before the 1990s, an attempt at racial reconciliation often took the form of joint church services or days of visitation between churches. Much in keeping with evangelical theology, racism at that time was not considered a corporate sin - it was an individual sin."[41]

"Why should I be responsible for the racism of other people?" is a question Jemar Tisby says is asked by "racial justice resisters."[42] It is also a question white evangelical Christians ask as they believe that only individual actions matter. They fail to acknowledge what the Bible

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40. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain.: A History from the 1730s to the 1780s, (*London: Routledge, 1989), 1- 17.

41. Butler, *White Evangelicals*, 86-87.

42. Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 95.

teaches about corporate responsibility and confession as evidenced in the Old Testament stories of Ezra (Ezra 9:6-7) or Daniel (Dan 9:8).

White evangelicals think that a relationship is all that is necessary to overcome the racism of the past. They believe that if there is relationship, the parties will see the love of Jesus and the rest will take care of itself. Emerson confirms that "[t]he racial reconciliation message given to the mass audience is individual reconciliation. That is, individuals of different races should develop strong, committed relationships. There is also need to repent of individual prejudice. Missing from this formula are the system-changing components of the original formulations."[43]

Black Christianity Formation

Black Christianity historically has been a religion of liberation and community as African Americans share a common ancestry as enslaved people and the commonality of being identified by skin color. This shared experience created a sense of community that was needed for survival in a foreign place fraught with danger and despair. McCaulley observes that "[i]t is common knowledge that when it comes to beliefs about the Bible and Christian theology more generally, evangelicals and black churches have much in common."[44] Pew Research found that 59% of black Protestants and 57% of evangelicals believe that the Bible is the word of God and should be interpreted "literally."[45] McCaulley confirms that Black Christian tradition "is not and has never been a monolith, but it is fair to say that the Black Church tradition is largely orthodox in

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43. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 67.

44. McCaulley, *Reading While Black,* 10.

45. "Members of the Historically Black Protestant Tradition who identify as black," *Pew Research Center*, https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/racial-and-ethnic-composition/black/religious-tradition/historically-black-protestant/, Accessed February 3, 2022.

its theology in the sense that it holds to many of the things that all Christians have generally believed."[46]

McCaulley, in his research of the key elements of the early Black theological enterprise found the first observation of the differences from Frederick Douglass, who saw a distinction, not so much between black Christianity and white, but between slaveholder religion and the Christianity of Jesus and the Bible:

> What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the slaveholding religion of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference….I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women- whipping, cradle- plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land.[47]

"Black Christianity historically has claimed that white slave master readings of the Bible used to undergird white denigration of black bodies were not merely one manifestation of Christianity to be contrasted with another, instead they said that such a reading was wrong. Enslaved black people, even those who remained illiterate in effect questioned white exegesis."[48]

James Cone first laid out the foundation for the interpretation of Christianity from the perspective of the enslaved when he describes that the sole purpose of his book, *Black Theology and Black Power,* is "to apply the freeing power of the gospel to black people under white oppression."[49] Cone asked these questions: "What does the Christian gospel have to say to

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46. McCaulley, *Reading While Black,* 5.

47. McCaulley, 17, quoting Frederick Douglass, *The Life of an American Slave*, Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845, 117.

48. McCaulley, *Reading While Black,* 17.

49. Cone, *Black Theology*, 36.

powerless black men whose existence is threatened daily by the insidious tentacles of white power? Is there a message from Christ to the countless number of blacks whose lives are smothered under white society?" Cone explains how the answer to these questions will shape the theology of Black people: "Unless theology can become "ghetto theology," a theology that speaks to black people, the gospel message has no promise of life for the black man - it is a lifeless message." Cone answers these questions by articulating that through Christ's work as a liberator, "God enters human affairs and takes sides with the oppressed.":

> Jesus' work is essentially one of liberation. Becoming a slave himself, He opens realities of human existence formally closed to man. Indeed, the message of the Kingdom strikes at the very center of man's desire to define his own existence in the light of his own interest at the price of his brother's enslavement.
>
> It is an age of liberation, in which "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the death are raised up, the poor have the good news preached to them." (Luke 7:22). This is not pious talk, and one does not need a seminary degree to interpret the message. It is a message about the ghetto, and all other injustices done in the name of democracy and religion to further the social, political, and economic interests of the oppressor.[50]

Cone, quoting Jurgen Moltmann, shares that when black people began to hear Jesus' message as contemporaneous with their life situation, "they will quickly recognize …the "political hermeneutics of the gospel" [and] Christianity becomes for them a religion of protest against the suffering and affliction of man."[51] "[T]he enslaved people read (or heard) in the biblical text about a God who delighted in liberation, and this gave them hope."[52] Cone and

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50. Cone, *Black Theology*, 41.

51. Cone, *Black Theology,* 42 quoting Jurgen Moltmann, "Toward a Political Hermeneutics of the Gospel," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 23, no 4 (Summer 1968), (New York: Union Theological Seminary), 313-14.

52. McCaulley, *Reading While Black,* 144.

Moltmann's perspectives are further supported by McCaulley's observation that the "social location" of the enslaved gave them a different perspective which took into consideration their situation as victim, oppressed, and in bondage based on color. "The social location of enslaved persons caused them to read the Bible differently. This unabashedly *located* reading has marked African American interpretation since."[53] McCaulley sums up the concept of Jesus as liberator as the basis for Black theology:

> Enslaved persons viewed events like God's redemption of Israel from slavery as paradigmatic for their understanding of God's character. They claimed that God is fundamentally a liberator. The character of Jesus, who though innocent, suffered unjustly at the hands of an empire, resonated on a deep level with the plight of the enslaved Black person. This focus on God as liberator stood in stark contrast to the focus of the slave masters, who emphasize God's desire for a social order with white masters at the top and enslaved Black people at the bottom.[54]

African Americans have viewed the message of salvation through the Scriptural lens of liberation and reconciliation, and this has shaped the Black Christian vision of God's character past and future.

McCaulley notes that Black theologians and writers "sometimes find themselves… thrust into the middle of a battle between white progressives and white evangelicals, feeling alienated in different ways from both." McCaulley contends that "the best instincts of the Black Church tradition − it's public advocacy for justice, its affirmation of the worth of black bodies and souls, its vision of a multiethnic community and faith − can be embodied by those who stand at the center of this tradition."[55]

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54. McCaulley, *Reading While Black,* 17.

53. McCaulley, *Reading While Black,* 17.

55. McCaulley, *Reading While Black,* 5-6.

McCaulley then argues that in addition to the four pillars of evangelicalism identified by Bebbington, there were very real, but unspoken, 5th and 6th pillars:

- a general agreement on a reading of American history that downplayed injustice and
- a gentlemen's agreement to remain largely silent on current issues of racism and systemic injustice[56]

These pillars contradict core tenets of Black Christianity. Social justice and the proclaiming of issues of injustice are strong themes throughout both the Old Testament (cf. Zech 7:9; Mic 6:8; Ps 82:3; Isa 1:17) and the New Testament (cf. Luke 18:1-8; Matt 12:18; Matt 23:23). Black Christianity calls for reconciliation that is both/and; a relationship building and a systemic correction. As John Perkins writes: "I think many of us want forgiveness without repentance. I sense this so much as I try to establish relationships with my white brethren in the South. I find they want my relationship, but they want more to quickly forget the brutality and the injustice that their people put upon many of us in the name of Christianity. And that's the frightening part." [57]

Reconciliation: Historical Attempts

The ministry of reconciliation is intended to bring the unity of the church to perfection. The church is being called to reconcile those separated by the wall of hostility, the brokenness caused by the sin of racism. A Barna study, '*Where Do We Go From Here'*, states "a majority of both black and white Americans agreed: that anger and hostility exist between different ethnic

56. McCaulley, *Reading While Black,* 11.

57. John Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, (Glendale: Regal Books, 1976), 9.

groups in the U.S. today (87% white and 82% black "somewhat" plus "strongly" agreed)."[58] Cassidy reminds us that this unique ministry is placed "on ***us*** who are Christians and whose unity transcends every divide, whether political, racial, social, gender, generation, or whatever."[59]

For the purpose of this thesis, reconciliation in the church is focused on the black–white divide because America is a racialized society. Cone defines a racialized society as "a society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships. A racialized society can also be said to be "[a] society that allocates differential economic, political, social, and even psychological rewards to groups along racial lines; lines that are socially constructed."[60]

The church has tried to adopt secular methods to break down the wall of hostility. These methods have not been successful for three reasons: First, they are premised on the idea of white superiority; second, they deny the uniqueness of the Imago Dei and third, they do not acknowledge the legacy of systemic barriers that are the direct result of years of hostility that have become part of the fabric of this country.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva poignantly demonstrates how the doctrine of white supremacy has undercut our aspiration of being a nation of equality. He writes of ways in which the metaphorical "melting pot" was consistently used to promote the vision of equal access in the American Dream. He noted that, as appealing as this vision is, it was never possible. Because our culture asserts that white people are superior, people of color never have equal access to that

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58. Barna Group and The Reimagine Group*, Where Do We Go From Here?*, (N.p., 2019), 38.

59. Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed*, 281-283 (emphasis added).

60. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 7.

pot. In a PBS documentary on race, Bonilla-Silva memorably said it like this: "[The] melting pot never included people of color. Blacks, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, etcetera, could not melt into the pot. They could be used as wood to produce the fire for the pot, but they could not be used as material to be melted into the pot."[61] Black and brown people and other people of color have been used to create wealth and enrich the economic standing of the United States, but they have not been the recipients of the largesse of the nation. Duke Kwon and Gregory Thompson describe one of the effects of white supremacy as the theft of wealth: "White supremacy has systematically stolen wealth from African Americans, creating demonstrably racialized economic inequality in American Society. [T]his theft has expressed itself in two ways: through the *extraction* of wealth and through the *obstruction* of wealth."[62]

A second method, the colorblind approach amounts to the dismissal of the lived experience of people of color. To say "I don't see race" eliminates the diversity of people of color who are made in the image of God. Hill explains how harmful this approach can be:

> Color blindness minimizes the racial-cultural, heritage of a person and promotes a culturally neutral approach that sees people independent of their heritage. The ideology of Christian color blindness is fortified by theological truths that are unfortunately misapplied to cultural identity.
>
> Color blindness minimizes the role culture played in the story of many Old Testament heroes. To be colorblind would risk missing some of the deepest meanings of Christ incarnation. Color blindness minimizes the overtones of cultural identity throughout the early church. Color blindness minimizes the ways God recognizes and celebrates cultural diversity.[63]

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61 Hill, *White Awake*, 55-56.

62. Duke L. Kwon and Gregory Thompson, *Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2021), 86.

63. Hill, *White Awake*, 41-44.

George Yancey provides an engaging analogy when he writes "[T]his notion of "colorblindness" discounts the degree of racial alienation we have in our society. We simply cannot treat skin color like we treat hair or eye color. Skin color represents a history of racial oppression and disenfranchisement that cannot be ignored."[64]

The third approach is to deny the reality of the systemic barriers. Emerson calls this the "miracle motif," the theologically rooted idea that as more individuals become Christians, social and personal problems will be solved automatically."[65] Promise Keepers (PK), a national movement calling for the renewal of Christian manhood formed in the 1990s, was the face of this philosophy. PK was one of the few Christian organizations to take on racial reconciliation as an action item. PK believed that getting to know each other individually across racial lines, would result in more change than working for more just laws. While individual relationships are an important component of reconciliation, unfortunately, PK did not embrace reconciliation as a both/and. Without addressing structural or systemic issues, PK minority participants did not feel truly heard or seen. Mark Pollard, a special associate of Promise Keepers in the 1990s, remembers that "[i]ncreasingly, white leaders told him that preaching against the sin of racism was a distraction from the message of the gospel."[66] Ultimately, the group floundered because,

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64. George Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches,* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 24.

65. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith,* 117-118.

66. Daniel Silliman, *Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked.*, Christianity Today: Racial Reconciliation, June 21, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/july-august/promise-keepers-racial-reconciliation-reconsidered.html.

as its founder, Bill McCartney noted, the focus on race was "a major factor in the significant fall-off in attendance − it was "simply a hard teaching for many."[67]

There is a new call for the church to lead the work of reconciliation. Defined as the work of the church, reconciliation provides a way forward to break down the wall of hostility using a biblical roadmap. Brenda Salter McNeil reminds us that reconciliation is "an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice: its goal is to *transform broken relationships and systems* so that they better reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish."[68]

Reconciliation: A Way Forward

Modeling a conversation on race is challenging work because, as the Brookings Institute states: "Slavery is the original American sin and, several centuries later, the country still has not come to terms with existing unfairness or taken meaningful steps to improve the situation."[69] As a result it is not easy to have open, authentic conversations about what occurred and the systemic remnants that remain. There are examples around the world of countries that have dealt with horrendous periods of their history by embracing the truth. Hill shares three examples:

> South Africa knew the only way to pursue healing after apartheid was to acknowledge that history honestly, and in 1996 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed. In 1999, Rwanda formed the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission to address the genocide their country had experienced. Canada launched a similar Commission in 2008 in an effort to completely acknowledge and address charges of abuse to First

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67. Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne,* 157-158.

68. Brenda Salter McNeil, *Becoming Brave*: *Finding the Courage to Pursue Racial Justice Now, (*Grand Rapids: Brazos Press), 2020, 23 (emphasis added).

69. John R. Allen and Darrell M. West, Brookings Institution, *National Reconciliation in America: Ways to Reconcile and Heal America*, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reconciliation-v3.1.pdf, Accessed February 7, 2022.

> Nations children at residential schools. All of these serve as models for beginning to chart a national course for lifting up the truth.[70]

The 2016 Barna research study showed that Americans feel the church should be instrumental in solving racial divides. Three in four U.S. adults (73%) confirmed "Christian churches play an important role in racial reconciliation."[71] Truth is the starting point. Christ gave us guidance on how to proceed when he said: "Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)

Jemar Tisby, described as a sociohistorical scholar, has developed a model called the ARC of Racial Justice. ARC is an acronym that stands for awareness, relationships, and commitment.[72] The first part of Tisby's model, awareness, covers the following categories: understanding the concept of race; what is Imago Dei; racial identity and the history of race. In sum, the first step is the understanding and acknowledging of truth. Christ's prayer for unity was rooted in truth. "And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth." (John 17:19) To achieve the perfection of unity, Christians must come together as one by embracing a true understanding and acknowledgement of the grievous sins which led to the wall of hostility and continue to operate as systemic barriers.

The process of acknowledging truth between white and Black Christians is difficult because of different theological formation. White Christians emphasize individual

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70. Hill, 78-79.

71. Barna Group, "Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension in America," Research/Culture & Media, May 5, 2016, (N.p.: Barna Group, 2016), https://www.barna.com/research/black-lives-matter-and-racial-tension-in-america/.

72. Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 5-7.

responsibility. Racism is seen as an individual act of people who are prejudiced. In an individualist community "the supreme value is the sovereignty of the individual."[73] Black Christians, because of their shared history of enslavement, view racist attacks against any member of the Black community as an attack against all members of the Black community. Black Christians adhere to a "collectivist culture, [where] the most important entity is the community."[74]

Acknowledging truth cannot occur without accepting that the original sin of America is not only an individual sin, it is a corporate sin and it was facilitated by white, Christian evangelicals. Duke Kwon explains the theological perspective when he states "Many Christians struggle with corporate responsibility. Even if I did not do something personally, I am responsible to repair and heal the thefts of the groups of which I am a part. That is neighbor love."[75]

Therefore, it is challenging to have a conversation about truth when white Christians ascribe the difference in the treatment of people of color to individual acts of prejudice even when historical facts demonstrate a more racialized systemic basis: Indigenous people were killed and pushed off their land in the US (Indian Removal Act of 1830);[76] Africans were

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73. Richards and O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture*, 96.

74. Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture,* 97.

75. Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "A religious argument for reparations? Christian authors make the case." Washington Post, April 14, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2021/04/14/christian-case-for-reparations/.

76. "Removing Native Americans from their Land," Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/native-american/removing-native-americans-from-their-land/, Accessed January 4, 2002.

enslaved for life;[77] Chinese immigrants were prohibited from entering the US "to placate worker demands and assuage prevalent concerns about maintaining white "racial purity;"[78] people of Japanese descent were targeted and sent to detention camps after the bombing on Pearl Harbor;[79] and today, immigration restrictions are focused on keeping out people from Muslim-majority countries and Spanish speaking countries, most notably Mexico.[80]

These experiences of racialized, systemic bias must be taken into consideration in any reconciliation effort. A more culturally competent approach to reconciliation by the church must take into consideration the true experiences of others. David Livermore defines cultural competence as "an umbrella term to refer to one's ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds."[81] Livermore describes four steps (and the related questions) which can be taken to increase one's cultural intelligence or CQ:

1. CQ Drive: what's your motivation for engaging with the cultural dimensions of this project?
2. CQ Knowledge: what cultural differences will most influence this project?
3. CQ Strategy: How will you plan in light of the cultural differences?
4. CQ Action: how do you need to adapt your behavior to function effectively on this project?

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77. "Slavery and the Making of America," (New York: Thirteen/WNET,2004), https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery /timeline/1662.html, Accessed January 4, 2021.

78. "Chinese Exclusion Act, Shall We Have Chinese No! No! No!," History, Aug.24, 2018, updated Sep. 13, 2019, https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/chinese-exclusion-act-1882.

79. "Executive Order 9066: Resulting in the Relocation of Japanese," National Archives, https://www.archives .gov/historical-docs/todays-doc/?dod-date=219, Accessed January 4, 2022.

80. Claire Felter, Danielle Renwick, and Amelia Cheatham, *The U.S. Immigration Debate*, Council on Foreign Relations, Updated August 31, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-immigration-debate-0.

81. David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, (New York: American Management Association, 2015), 33.

Craig Hendrickson explains the importance of leading with cultural intelligence in "increasingly complex" ministry environments when he writes, "Leading with CQ means developing awareness into how my own cultural and racial identity formation influence the way I lead and make meaning in my context."[82] For white Christians, that may mean understanding that there is a "white culture" and its dominance on other cultures. As Daniel Hill describes in the chapter entitled "The Day I Discovered My World Was White," realizing that his world was all white and that "when white culture comes in contact with other cultures, it almost always wins" was unsettling, but not obvious to him.[83]

Ligenfelter and Mayers, discussing culture and how it shapes what we see and how we behave states: "[a]ll human behavior occurs within specific cultures, making it a particularly important idea to engage. Culture, then, is the conceptual design by which people order their lives, interpret their experiences, and evaluate the behavior of others."[84] Brislin and Yoshida, introducing an awareness of culture, examines a list of its features and how it is shared within communities: "Culture consists of concepts, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are widely shared by people….[These] are *transmitted generation to generation, rarely with explicit instructions, by parents, teachers, religious figures, and other respected*

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82. Craig Hendrickson, Associate Professor of Pastoral Studies, Moody Bible Institute, "Leading with Cultural Intelligence." Presented by Rodney Cooper, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary D.Min. Residency, Fall 2019.

83. Hill, *White Awake*, 4.

84. Sherwood G. Ligenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: A Model for Effective Personal Relationships*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=4448436#, 27.

elders."[85] How the information about the cause and effect of America's 'wall of hostility' informs perceptions, behaviors and decisions is an important part of the culture and must be part of the reconciliation process.

As Christians engaging in the ministry of reconciliation, it is also important to understand how race and cultural formation inform how scripture is interpreted. Hendrickson states that leading with CQ means "developing awareness into how my own cultural and racial identity formation influence the way I lead and make meaning in my context."[86]

Richards and O'Brien, describe how individualist versus collectivist assumptions can shape our exegesis or reading of Scripture: "In western individualist cultures, the decision to become a Christian is a personal and individual decision. In collectivist societies, conversion is not strictly an individual decision, so it is often not an individual experience."[87] Scripture provides two approaches to understanding shared responsibility and collectivist identity. First is the ancient Hebrew culture which recognizes communal responsibility for offense to God as we see in the story of Ezra as he cries out in shame to God: "Then, at the evening sacrifice, *I* rose from *my* self-abasement, with *my* tunic and cloak torn, and fell on *my* knees with *my* hands spread out to the LORD *my* God and prayed: *I* am too ashamed and disgraced, *my* God, to lift up *my* face to you, because *our* sins are higher than *our* heads and *our* guilt has reached to the

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85. Richard Brislin and Tomoko Yoshida*, Intercultural Communication Training: An Introduction*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 118 (emphasis added).

86. Hendrickson, "Leading with Cultural Intelligence."

87. Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture,* 103.

heavens" (Ezra 9:5-6; *emphasis added*). Ezra accepted personal responsibility even though he had not committed the sin but accepted the responsibility as a member of the community.

Second is the concept of family as a metaphor used throughout Scripture. Richards and O'Brien provide two examples of this collectivist identity metaphor of "the family of God" in Scripture: In Matthew 12:49-50, Jesus responds to his disciples when they tell him his mother and brothers are waiting: "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." The apostle Paul also uses familial language in 1 Timothy 1:2 and Titus 1:4 to describe how "kingdom relationships are depicted as the believer's primary family."[88] McCaulley expands on the concept of family: "Paul's rhetoric makes it difficult for Philemon to make much of his status as owner and Onesimus status as slave. Paul also uses familial language, calling Philemon his brother. The point is clear. Oneness in Christ transforms relationships. Society values those with power and status. Christians treat all people − slave, free, or prisoner − as family. This idea that slaves and masters are family undermines slavery. Who would enslave a brother or sister?"[89]

Richards and O'Brien describe the impact of this family relationship, operating in unity, and fully reconciled: "when these relationships operate appropriately…the Christian community embodies the faith in such a way that outsiders take notice and God is glorified."[90]

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88. Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture,* 106.

89. McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 153.

90. Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture,* 106.

Perfecting unity through reconciliation also requires mutual responsibility. There is a responsibility for the oppressed also because biblically, we are called to forgive. "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them" (Luke 17:3-4) (cf. Eph 4:31-32). George Yancey reviewed four secular models of dealing with racism and advocates for a Christian model which "envisions a society where we have "healed our damaged racial relationships…through repentance and forgiveness that can help correct previously dysfunctional relationships."[91]

Lisa Sharon Harper shares how forgiveness is a gift to the one who forgives: "Forgiveness releases us. It cuts the tie between us and our oppressor. Forgiveness is for our sake, not for white folks' sake. To be clear, …and I'm not saying forgive it all; I'm saying forgive that which cannot be repaired, and which can never be restored. And that which can be repaired and restored, must be repaired, and restored. That's how we will repair our relationship."[92] Forgiveness does not mean that one ignores the evil and injustice, but it does mean that with repentance the offender is released. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude."[93] The mutual responsibility model envisions a

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91. George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 139.

92. Kathryn Post, "Lisa Sharon Harper's 'Fortune' uncovers America's racial roots in family stories," *Religion News Service*, Arts & Culture, February 3, 2022, https://religionnews.com/2022/02/03/christian-activist-lisa-sharon-harpers-family-story-uncovers-americas-racial-roots/.

93. Martin Luther King Jr., "Draft of Chapter IV, "Love in Action" Sermon," Stanford University, 1962-1963, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/draft-chapter-iv-love-action, accessed March 13, 2022.

balancing of repentance and forgiveness that results in healing our damaged racial relationships.[94]

Multi-Ethnic Church: Growth

When Emerson and Smith first wrote about evangelical religion and the problem of race in America in 2000, their work gained a significant amount of attention as Christians all over the country saw multi-ethnic churches as a possible bridge to resolve racial differences in the nation. Tom Gjelten, summarizing Emerson and Smith's provocative conclusions, stated that evangelicals "likely do more to perpetuate the racial divide than to tear it down," largely because they tended to worship in racially segregated congregations and viewed racial prejudice as an individual, not a societal, problem."[95]

The movement toward multi-ethnic churches has grown since the publication of *Divided by Faith* in 2000 which exposed the true racial divide within the church.[96] According to Michael Emerson, the growth of evangelical multiracial churches has more than tripled in the period 1998 to 2019:

- Catholic Congregations: from 17% (2006) to 24% racial diversity (2019).
- Mainline Protestant: from 1% (2006) to 11% (2019), having previously reached 12% in 2012.
- Evangelical Churches: from 7% (1998) to 23% (2019), up from 15% in 2012.[97]

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94. Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock*, 139.

95. Tom Gjelten, "Multiracial Congregations May Not Bridge the Racial Divide," All Things Considered, National Public Radio, July 17, 2020. https://www.npr.org/2020/07/17/891600067/multiracial-congregations-may-not-bridge-racial-divide.

96. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*.

97. Michael Emerson, Multiethnic Church, *Released! New 2020 Statistics on Multiracial Churches*, January 8, 2020, https://multiethnic.church/released-new-2020-statistics-on-multiracial-churches/.

After an extensive three-year study, Curtiss DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey and Karen Chai Kim, published a follow-up to *Divided by Faith*, entitled *United by Faith* which made two bold claims. First, that "Christian congregations, when possible, should be multiracial." And second, "that a Christian, by biblical definition, is a follower of Jesus Christ whose way of life is racial reconciliation."[98]

DeYoung, et al stated that the movement toward multiracial congregations would require "a fundamental shift in belief systems and organizational practices."[99] DeYoung identified three changes necessary to bring about multiracial congregations: (1) a theological worldview change, (2) a theology of oneness, and (3) a core belief of oneness.[100]

The change in theological worldview is required to let go of the racialized society that has normalized separation in the body of Christ. Adopting Paul's theology of oneness would be fully embracing the oneness of humanity as God intended. Mitchell and Cooper-Lewter explain how a core belief can suggest a whole new way: "Core beliefs are the bedrock attitudes that govern all deliberate behavior and relationships and also all spontaneous responses to crisis."[101] A core belief is a nonnegotiable commitment like Martin Luther King's commitment to nonviolence, even in the face of dogs, water hoses and police brutality.

Yancey conducted the first national research on racially integrated congregations to learn more about multi-ethnic churches and identified the following seven general principles of

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98. DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith,* 2, 129.

99. DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith,* 149.

100. DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith,* 150-161.

101. Henry H. Mitchell and Nicholas C. Cooper-Lewter, *Soul Theology: The Heart of American Black Culture*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 3.

successful multiracial churches: inclusive worship; diverse leadership; overarching goal; intentionality of attitude; skills and abilities of church leader; location; and adaptability.[102]

Mark DeYmaz, outlined seven core commitments of forming a multi-ethnic church based on his experience as co-founder of Mosaic Church, a multi-ethnic church in Little Rock, Arkansas: embracing dependence to spiritual virtues; intentional steps but dependent on God; empower diverse leadership; cross-cultural relationships; cross-cultural competence; spirit of inclusion and mobilize for impact in the community.[103]

Yancey and DeYmaz have considerable overlap in their findings of the core principles necessary for forming a multi-ethnic church. Yancey's approach focuses on "big picture" principles as evidenced in the over 1200 churches he surveyed across the country, such as location, managing conflict during the transition and remaining focused on the overarching goal. Staying focused on the overarching goal can help minimize race fatigue or tiredness with the difficulty of understanding and the length of time it takes to deal with racism, which can be a deterrent to building a multi-ethnic church. Yancey explains how to stay focused even when it becomes tiring:

> Having an overarching goal is an important way to diffuse the potential objections of individuals who resist changing cultural elements within a church. If being multiracial helps fulfill a goal that is important to the members of a particular church or ministry, then it becomes easier for the leaders of that church to encourage fellow church members to put forth the efforts necessary to create a multiracial ministry.[104]

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102. George A. Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit,* 66-70.

103. Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, (Calif: John Wiley & Sons, 2007).

104. Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit,* 98-107.

DeYmaz, on the other hand, provides direct testimony based on his experience building a multiethnic church. He stresses dependence on God through prayer and faith, developing cross cultural relationships, cross-cultural competence, and a spirit of inclusion. DeYmaz shares his story of being called by God to plant a church focused on two primary works of reconciliation: 'on reconciling men and women to God through faith in Jesus Christ (evangelism)' and second, 'on reconciling a local body of believers with the principles and practices of the New Testament local church.'" Racial reconciliation is not a primary focus yet is "a supernatural by-product of these two *a priori* works of reconciliation."[105] DeYmaz's principles provide a more intimate discussion of the pros and cons, the mistakes and the specific opportunities for growth that came out of trial and error based on his calling and personal experience.

The unrelenting news cycle of 2020 and 2021 exposed the ugly underside of American race relations. The turbulent election, the nationwide shutdown due to Covid-19, the realization that 'essential workers' were often minorities and low wage workers, and the brutal murder of African American men by neighborhood vigilantes and the police, captured on video, were all overwhelming. And yet many church leaders remained silent. Sadly, the events of 2020 and 2021 brought the growth of multiethnic churches to a halt and deflated many congregations as Black Christians left white churches citing a "lack of understanding" of the "depth of pain" they were feeling.[106]

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105. DeYmaz, *Building,* xxv-xxvii.

106. Campbell Robertson, *A Quiet Exodus: Why Black Worshipers Are Leaving White Evangelical Churches*, New York Times, March 9, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/blacks-evangelical-churches.html.

Multi-Ethnic Church: Decline

Historically, the growth in multiracial churches comes primarily from a one-way street of people of color moving into white churches. Dougherty, in the report on Racial Diversity in U.S. Congregations, 1998-2019, states: "When people in white congregations explicitly value and intentionally seek to achieve a more diverse congregation, this goal rarely is pursued by leaving white congregations to attend predominantly black ones (or, probably, any other congregations of color)."[107] Emerson says "We have seen zero change in the percentage of whites moving into churches of color."[108] The problem is further compounded by multiethnic churches becoming less diverse when whites leave because the church became less than 50% white.

Dougherty confirms that his research also demonstrates that "[m]ore ethnic minorities, including African Americans, are attending predominantly white congregations, but whites and others who are not African American are finding their way to predominantly black churches only in miniscule numbers. White people generally appear to be as unwilling as ever to attend predominantly black churches."[109]

Korie Little Edwards, a sociologist studying religion, found a similar pattern. "to a point where I realized that, you know, these multiracial churches, just because they're multiracial, doesn't mean they have somehow escaped white supremacy. Being diverse doesn't mean that

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107. Kevin D. Dougherty, Michael O. Emerson, and Mark Chaves, *Racial Diversity in U.S. Congregations, 1998-2019*, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, January 1, 2020. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi /10.1111/jssr.12681.

108. Gjelten, *"Multiracial Congregations."*

109. Dougherty, *"Racial Diversity."*

white people are not going to still be in charge and run things."[110] The distinction between multiracial and multicultural often comes down to whether diversity is fully integrated into the worship, leadership, and programming of the church. "A church can be multiracial yet culturally homogenous because all power and influence in the congregation is held by members of the same cultural group."[111] Chanequa Walker-Barnes explains how members who are ethnically diverse may share the same culture:

> Race and ethnicity, after all, are only one component of culture, which is also shaped by factors such as education, occupation, economic class, nationality, geographic region, age, generation, and language. Processes of assimilation, enculturation, and amalgamation help to shift culture over time. Thus, people with different ancestries may share a common culture. With rare exception, that common culture tends to be middle-class whiteness, or what many people refer to as "dominant American culture" or even "just American."[112]

A second issue is that white members are reluctant to be led by a pastor of color. There was greater minority presence in the pews of multiethnic churches but less representation in the pulpit. Dougherty reports that "white clergy remain overrepresented as leaders of such congregations. Half of the people in these congregations are white, but three-fourths of these congregations are led by white clergy."[113] Keith Moore, a Black pastor in Montgomery, Ala. shares his experience: "When you see both African Americans and Caucasian Americans [in a church], it's more than likely to have a Caucasian pastor," he says. "I think it's sometimes more

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110. Korie Little Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interrracial Churches*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), https://web-s-ebscohost-com.gordonconwell.idm.oclc.org/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzI0MjE5NF9fQU41?sid=021f6507-1020-41b3-bd86-d11a3770af88@redis&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1.

111. Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *"Why Multicultural Churches Fail-Part One",* Collegeville Institute, May 31, 2018, https://collegevilleinstitute.org/bearings/why-multicultural-churches-fail/.

112. Walker-Barnes, *"Why Multicultural Churches Fail."*

113. Dougherty, *"Racial Diversity."*

difficult for whites to look at a Black pastor and see him as their authority. That's a tough call for many."[114]

Multiethnic churches can be a painful experience for people of color. Edwards shares how minorities are getting hurt: "In many ways (people of color) are expected to assimilate to the dominant White culture. They end up having to hide or let go of their own cultural preferences and minimizing their ethnic and racial identity."[115] Similar to the homogeneous unit principle, some churches only want to attract people of color in the right 'category' of diversity which may eliminate socioeconomic diversity in the church. Dougherty explains how churches seek conformity: "Instead, for whites, diversity is pursued by trying to attract people of color who will not challenge white congregants' views and practices, sometimes even assuring this selectivity by interacting with potential black participants in ways that ensure that those unwilling to accommodate white culture will not return."[116]

The devastating events of 2020 – Covid 19 and the murder of George Floyd – were bellwethers in the assessment of the viability of multiethnic churches. Parishioners were watching and waiting for their leaders to address the obvious and to comfort those who felt vulnerable and exposed. Some were ridiculed by their pastors because they choose to stay home and worship online due to pre-existing medical conditions which put them at high risk. Instead of caring for the flock, the insensitivity or silence of pastors drove many Black parishioners away from their congregations. Dara Mathis reports that "[a]cross the country, Black Americans, feel

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114. Gjelten, *"Multiracial Congregations."*

115. Shimron, *"Multiracial churches are growing."*

116. Dougherty, *"Racial Diversity."*

under siege from the coronavirus pandemic and raw from the police brutality fueling Black Lives Matter protests. But some are nursing another intimate wound: Their churches failure to acknowledge their pain."[117] Black members are hurt when their issues of health inequities or the impact of racism are not addressed. The issues are too large to be ignored or swept under the rug, but multi-ethnic churches seem to be afraid or unable to address them.

"[R]acial and ethnic diversity in congregations sometimes functions as a superficial, performative end in itself, with conversation about racial differences and inequalities avoided or even discouraged, and with people of color welcomed into visible roles (like greeters or ushers or singers) while simultaneously excluded from positions of authority."[118] Emerson, describes this avoidance by white Christians who reject stories of the country's racial divides as intentionally ignoring the world around them. "It isn't a lack of understanding so much as it's what we call the epistemology of ignorance— willful lack of understanding," he said. "It's an investment to not understand, that I will not hear what others are saying, because it doesn't benefit the way I interpret the world."[119]

With this as the state of our country, David Swanson shares the frustration and timidity of white pastors and ministry leaders who say, "I don't know what to do." "I've never been here before." "This is new for me." "I was caught completely by surprise."[120] Seeking reconciliation

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117. Dara Mathis, "The Church's Black Exodus."

118. Dougherty, *"Racial Diversity."*

119. Bob Smietana, "Woke war: How social justice and CRT became heresy for evangelicals," Religion News Service, News, February 7, 2022, https://religionnews.com/2022/02/07/woke-war-why-social-justice-became-heresy-for-evangelicals-owen-strachan-crt-southern-baptists-trump/.

120. David Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 6.

in an effort to build or grow a multi-ethnic church requires a first step forward by modeling a conversation on race and its impact, using biblical principles.

Multi-Ethnic Church: A Way Forward

One of the most important positive findings from the *Beyond Diversity* study is this: People widely *want* the church to take a place of leadership on these critical topics! Building diverse community surfaces as the number-one perceived solution: "Two-thirds of practicing Christians believe churches, in general, should have a major role in improving race relations by welcoming people of all races in their congregations."[121]

Black congregants felt abandoned by their multiethnic churches when the church failed to lament with those who were suffering in the wake of hostility and helplessness. Members share how they feel isolated and alone when tragedy strikes, like the murder of Trayvon Martin, and church members accuse them of being divisive when they bring up the issue. Tamice Namae Spencer recalls "It's not even on [their] radar and I can't sleep over it," she remembered thinking. "And now that I'm being vocal, you think I've changed."[122] Soong-Chan Rah discusses why there is such a lack of understanding, "The American church avoids lament. The absence of lament in the liturgy of the American church results in a loss of memory. We forget the necessity of lamenting over pain and suffering. We forget the reality of suffering and pain."[123]

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121. Barna, *"Beyond Diversity",* 30.

122. Robertson, "*A Quiet Exodus"*.

123. Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 22.

Lamenting the suffering and pain of others requires a deeper relationship. It requires understanding the whole person and having difficult conversations in a loving way. Tisby opines that we are not relational enough. He advocates that "you cannot pursue true racial justice without authentic relationships with people who are different from you."[124]

Michael Emerson shares his vision for how there will be continued growth in breaking down the wall by training new leaders: "This means we must witness a revolution in seminary training. Seminaries must now prepare their students for multiracial/ethnic/cultural ministry. This will not mean adding a course or two on "multicultural ministry." Emerson explains that it will mean overhauling how theological training is done:

> For example, I see a day when seminarians will be trained in understanding race and ethnic relations, when they will learn biblical interpretation from great scholars around the world (rather than principally Western thinkers), when they will be trained in multiple styles of preaching, and when methods of generating a united body through diversity will be woven throughout their courses.[125]

Existing leaders can also experience continued growth and develop a path forward by starting a conversation on race. Walker-Barnes says the path forward occurs as "its leaders undergo a process of transformation through which they examine and become clearer about their own cultural assumptions and limitations, develop an unending passion for learning about and from people of different cultures, and are willing to face and work through their biases.[126] In sum, these leaders become redemptive leaders.

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124. Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 5.

125. Michel O. Emerson, "Demographic Revolution and the church," Duke Divinity, April 25, 2011, https://faithandleadership.com/michael-o-emerson-demographic-revolution-and-the-church.

126. Chanequa Walker-Barnes, "How Multicultural Churches can Succeed-Part Two," Collegeville Institute, June 4, 2018 https://collegevilleinstitute.org/bearings/multicultural-churches-succeed/.

Redemptive Leadership Model

God calls each of us to the practice of Christian leadership to work as His agents to redeem the world for His glory. Redemptive leadership is modeled on Christ, the Redeemer-Servant-Leader, the one who redeemed us from sin, modeled leadership and came to serve, not be served. Harvey Powers shares that God uses broken leaders to transform the lives of others because redemptive leaders can "see" things differently and because of that they can help others "see" things differently as well.[127]

Jack Alexander, co-producer of the Barna study '*Where Do We Go From Here?'* shares that the church has an opportunity to be a redemptive leader, to help others see how to break down the wall of hostility, as 75% of practicing Christians are open to solutions: "[M]any practicing Christians believe the Church should do something proactive to respond to injustices facing black Americans, whether it be lamenting, repenting or providing restitution. Though 28 percent say there is nothing the American Church needs to do, another one in four simply doesn't know what should be done."[128]

Redemptive leaders have to first look at their own heart and their own motivations. Reggie McNeal shares three priorities for leaders to do to develop their heart and influence culture: know where you come from, know where you stand, and know where you want to go and take others with you. Doing so will create an open heart and allow God to use the leader as a transformation agent.[129] For McNeal, knowing where you come from "broadens the worldview

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127. Harvey Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, 114.

128. Barna Study, *Where Do We Go From Here? 5.*

129. Reggie McNeal*, A Work of Heart*, (San Francisco: Wiley Imprint, 2011), 75.

of leaders." Understanding the history and causation of our "wall of hostility" in the church is critical to being a redemptive leader. Understanding the history of racism in this country will allow the leader to begin modeling a conversation on race and distinguish truth from myth or outright lies.

Second, knowing where you stand means looking for ways God is at work in the culture and focusing on "those trends that influence the spiritual climate of the culture and some implications for Christian ministry."[130] Modeling a conversation on race is a way for leaders to be proactive at a time when the discord in our country is crippling the Christian witness.

Third, McNeal urges the leader to "look ahead" to determine where they want to go and describes two options: refuge or mission. A refuge response is reactionary and focuses on withdrawal. A mission response is transformational and engages people in heart-to-heart encounters.[131] Black Christians historically have chosen refuge *and* mission. A homogenous Black church provides refuge from the daily transgressions that Black Americans face, however, it also provides a launching pad for mission work to pursue justice and the collective work of caring for others.

White evangelical churches have also historically chosen both refuge and mission for different reasons. A white, homogeneous church can provide refuge because members are around people who think and act like them. It is a safe space where they do not have to engage with the socioeconomic diversity of the community. The white church can engage in mission without engaging in the lives of the people they serve through mission.

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130. McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 78.

131. McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 73-93.

A true mission response that engages heart-to-heart encounters requires courage and risk taking. Salter McNeil challenges leaders to find courage…by taking big and small risks just like Jesus did…he "*literally* came and showed up."[132] Finding the courage to be a redemptive leader is allowing the power of God to work within our life in spite of fear, weakness, or failure.

Being a redemptive leader can give us authenticity when we are humble enough to share our story. During the seminar I hosted for this project thesis, I shared an interview with a woman who grew up with grandparents who were in the KKK (Appendix A). Her humility at telling this very personal story was a powerful testimony to the changing grace of Christ. At the end of the interview, she acknowledged that knowing her past motivates her to work to change the future. She has been redeemed from the racism and hatred of her family to be a transformative leader for Christ.

Salter McNeil highlights an example of a redemptive leader who was called during a time of grave difficulty. Ida B. Wells, the journalist, newspaper editor and suffragist, sociologist, and civil rights activist was born a slave and led a campaign against lynching in the 1890s. She was redeemed from a life of slavery and used her freedom to highlight the horrendous treatment of recently freed enslaved people and their supporters. She risked her life to tell the truth about the violence and injustice to build unity among people alienated from one another.[133]

Redemptive leaders have the opportunity to move forward and use a biblical curriculum to model a conversation on race and re-establish the leadership of the church. Salter McNeil

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132. McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 44.

133. Cf. Alfreda M. Duster, ed., *Crusade For Justice: the Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, May 13, 2020).

calls the church to show up: "The Church has lost the respect of the culture at large, particularly that of the younger generation rising up before our eyes; It's time for us to put up or shut up."[134] Millennials want the church to do more in racial reconciliation and see a path toward repairing the damage and repenting. "Millennials are the least likely age group to say they don't know how the Church should respond to racial injustice (19% Millennials, 27% Gen X, 29% Boomers, 29% Elders)."[135]

The heart of the leader will set the tone for an organization. A redemptive leader knows that the heart must be one of a servant. To be a redemptive "doer of the Word" (James 1:22-25), a redemptive leader focuses on deep heart change, their followers, and their organization. The journey of failure and success helps to develop an internal direction. Robert Clinton describes how redemptive leaders influence through who they are: "As a leader, you should recognize that God is continually developing you over a lifetime. His top priority is to conform you to the image of Christ for ministry with spiritual authority. Enduring fruitfulness flows out of being."[136]

The redemptive leadership model also requires that a leader look at their "dark side" to determine what are the areas of vulnerabilities. Only by acknowledging the truth of shortcomings can a redemptive leader be authentic. Through this redemption "there is

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134. McNeil, *A Work of Heart*, 60.

135. Barna Group, "Where Do We Go From Here", 46.

136. Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 45.

deliverance from a curse or burden and a setting free to live fully."[137] Redemptive leaders have an opportunity to lead by example. Swanson writes:

> Confessing our failure to disciple people in the way of Jesus will be difficult. The temptation to pull back, to look for an easier way to address the unease we feel about our churches, will be strong. Instead, our own repentance over shallow spiritual formation and harmful segregation is a prerequisite for the way forward.[138]

Greg Thompson, in an interview with Sarah Pulliam Bailey, provides an example of what redemptive leaders could do: "Pastors could start by telling the truth about American history. They could tell the truth about Black power and glory, and not just about Black trauma. They could talk about how we could use our money to repair the brokenness in our city. One area we touch on is memorialization. Churches can help build collaborative memorials for important African American churches."[139]

Robin Diangelo, quoting blogger Rashida Campbell-Allen argues that this work requires a "lifelong commitment to self-reflection, action, education, awareness and listening to constructive criticism…"[140] which is necessary to recognize your own biases. Chris Beard, pastor of Peoples Church Cincinnati and author of *Remarkable: The Diversity United, Blood Bought Church of Jesus Christ*, describes his personal challenge: "I've had sinful thoughts, racist thoughts in my own heart that I've had to come to terms with," he says. "The reality is we're

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137. Cooper, "Redemptive Leadership Lecture".

138. Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church,* 9.

139. Pulliam Bailey, "A Religious argument for reparations?

140. Robin Diangelo, *Nice Racism*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2021), 163.

human beings and our brains are wired to categorize. The more conscious we are of our implicit biases, the more healing we can be in our relationships."[141]

Redemptive leaders have the opportunity to change the historical messages that have been handed down from generation to generation. Gerardo Marti, professor of sociology at Davidson College in North Carolina, wrote "white evangelicals are uniquely uniform in their attitudes. Their religious and political views are reinforced in their churches, parachurch organizations, media outlets and spokespeople. What you're seeing is that they have a way of talking to each other in which they can reinforce a cultural identity that becomes unquestioned." Marti expands on how these views are shared within a closed culture: "They're immersed in it. They bow down to it, even those who aren't evangelical. They can live in a world in which all these things are taken for granted."[142]

Harvey Powers outlines the key components of the redemptive leadership model: competency, principles, character, transformation, and redemptive (Appendix B). In this model, the leader often gets stuck at character formation which relates to what a person does. The leader is focused on getting things done as the objective and the priority when in reality it is what is in our heart that matters most. The redemptive leadership model focuses most on internal, core

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141. Rachel Martin, "How a Once White Church Broke Down Racial Barriers," Weekend Edition Sunday, *National Public Radio*, August 30, 2015, https://www.npr.org/2015/08/30/435955069/a-white-church-sets-out-to-break-down-racial-barriers.

142. Yonat Shimron, "Study: Most evangelicals don't want to live in a religiously diverse country," *Religion News Service*, November 1, 2021, https://religionnews.com/2021/11/01/study-most-white-evangelicals-dont-want-to-live-in-a-religiously-diverse-country/.

development. Harvey defines character development as "the deep marks left in our core structure, formed by the shaping events of our lives."[143]

A crisis can take the leader through the next stage of development transformation. Powers explains how a crisis can be a breaking point or a catalyst to an "unforeseen amplified influence…[g]etting to the heart of transformation proves to be no easy task, primarily because transformation involves an inward work of the heart, which then works its way outward into our thoughts, behavior, and mindset."[144] A redemptive leader's beliefs become their convictions and it often requires standing for their principles and suffering for them: "counterintuitively, the crisis of this revelation opens a portal to an inward journey of transformation."[145] Such an experience results in the leader shifting from doing to being. As the leader becomes focused on purpose and meaning they impart hope to others.

The goal of reconciliation is to build the perfect unity that Christ prayed for in the Garden of Gethsemane. The white, evangelical church is in the character-building stage of redemptive leadership development. They will have to go through the crucible stage of preaching and teaching the truth of the origin of the present-day wall of hostility before they can be redemptive leaders. Taking a stand to acknowledge the truth will be difficult and costly but it is the only way to demonstrate the true reconciling power of Christ. The white, evangelical church will have to show up and be present like Christ or risk backsliding into doing only what is

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143. Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, 71.

144. Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, 84, 88.

145. Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, 151-153.

convenient. They will have to go through the discomfort and unease and recognize that there is no quick fix.

It is a heavy price to pay as the Black church knows so well. They have gone through centuries of crisis and fighting for the truth of the Gospel message – that God created one humanity and we are all equal in His sight. This is most evident in the willingness of Black congregants to forgive and go into white churches seeking unity. The Black church has been transformed and continues to lead in the journey for the truth of the Gospel.

In order to overcome 400 years of hostility, there must be an intentionality to changing the paradigm. Russell Moore shares Emerson's belief in the importance of training up the next generation of leaders: "Because the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow kept Christian universities and seminaries segregated for so long, we need to be proactive. If the future of evangelicalism is to be multiethnic, the Church needs to focus on the next generation's leadership."[146] Swanson advocates for training up the next generation of lay leaders as also critically important and explains why this is the church's responsibility: "[O]nce we see white Christianity complicity with racial segregation and injustice, it is our urgent responsibility to reimagine our discipleship practices such that our communities are oriented toward the reconciled Kingdom of God."[147]

Randy Phillips, a Vineyard pastor from California, active in PK in the 1990s, reflects on the importance of discipleship based on his experience with the organization and its subsequent failure: "If people know how God sees them…. then it's possible for them to see other people—across racial lines and cultural differences — as beloved children of God. It's possible to love

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146. Moore, *Where do we go from here*? 55.

147. Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church,* 45.

your neighbor sacrificially. But that takes discipleship and participation in a local church…. Promise Keepers needed to be more about empowering the local church and less about getting people to catalytic events." [148]

Summary

The work of the church can influence the world because we are represented in every sector of the world: "In reality, every division in our world and in society is crisscrossed with our Lord's agents, of reconciliation who, if they link hands and work in cooperation, can pull off the most remarkable exploits of reconciliation."[149] The ministry of reconciliation is the work of each and every Christian wherever located. It is the witness of evangelicalism to demonstrate that the church is unified, not separated by a wall of hostility. The work of reconciliation can best be led by someone who recognizes the "crucible" experiences in their life which opens up a "portal to an inward journey of transformation. Then, the redemptive leader has the authority to "speak into others' lives and guide them.[150]

The books and articles reviewed clearly indicate that the wall of hostility between white, evangelical Christians and Black Christians is directly related to the history of slavery in America and the fact that the church has been complicit from the very beginning. This history must be acknowledged and uncovered before the wall can come down. The literature review from white and Black authors clearly indicate white, evangelical Christians cannot remain in a state of individual denial. There must be communal awareness, confession, repentance, and

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148. Silliman, *Christianity Today*.

149. Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed*, 281-283.

150. Powers, *Redemptive Leadership*, 150-151.

repair on behalf of the church and the community it represents before all parties can move forward.

Engaging in individual relationships is not enough. Understanding the history and its impact on Black Christians is a starting point to acknowledging the brokenness. However, reconciliation can only occur when both parties are honest and engaged in acknowledging the historical divide and the present-day systemic barriers which remain.

The research results in chapter four confirms how eye opening this acknowledgement can be and how it can create a sense of confidence and equip a leader to empower a first step towards pursuing a multi-ethnic church. Redemptive leaders can experience a crucible just going through the process of modeling a conversation on race, and that newly engaged and empowered leadership can be transformative for them and for their church. It is an opportunity to be transformed by truth and to lead others in the pursuit of truth.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

"Modeling Conversations on Race" was a project with four main elements: selection of a curriculum, recruitment of pastors, creation of a series of two seminars using *Be the Bridge* as the base, and a post-seminar survey.

Project Overview

The impetus for this project was Philip Pinckney's revelation that in the weeks since George Floyd's murder, he was "inundated with messages from white evangelical pastors who wanted to take a stand against racism: 40 to 60 phone calls a day, dozens of texts and email chains, endless drafts of sermons and articles."[1] Pinckney is a Black pastor in Charleston, SC who has operated as an unofficial consultant to white evangelical pastors.

Aaron Earls, reporting on a LifeWay Research study writes: "Pastors seem more reluctant to address issues of race in their congregations today than four years ago."[2] According to the research, 74 percent of pastors agree their congregation would welcome a sermon on racial reconciliation, compared to 90 percent just four years ago.

The questions this project seeks to answer are: Will pastors be more willing to engage in conversations on race and racial reconciliation if they had a biblical model as a framework; if they could prepare by asking questions in a safe space; and if they could develop relationships

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1. Emma Green, "The Unofficial Racism Consultants to the White Evangelical World," *The Atlantic*, July 8, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/07/white-evangelicals-black-lives-matter/613738/.

2. Aaron Earls, "Pastors More Reluctant to Preach on Race," *Christianity Today*, January 12, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/january/pastors-reluctant-preach-racial-reconciliation-lifeway-surv.html.

with other pastors in their geographic area that they could use as a sounding board going forward?

Part One: Selecting the Curriculum

The first step of the project was to select the curriculum to be used for the seminars. I reviewed three curricula to determine what would be best for the project recognizing that I would be limited in the amount of time pastors could attend a seminar series. The five factors I considered were 1) biblical basis for the content, 2) ease of delivery, 3) suitability to encourage redemptive leaders to take a first step to a race conversation 4) whether the curriculum could be supplemented, if desired, to make it more relevant to the audience, and 5) whether the curriculum could be used by any denomination. The three curriculum I selected were: *Living Undivided*[3] (now called Courageous Love) by Chuck Mingo; *The Multi-Ethnic Christian Life Primer* [4]by Mark DeYmaz and Oneya Fennell Okuwobi; and *Be the Bridge*[5] by Latasha Morrison.

Living Undivided by Chuck Mingo is a "six-week multi-racial experiential journey in pursuit of racial solidarity and justice."[6] I participated in this course once a week from July 28, 2021 through September 1, 2021. This curriculum is very interactive with weekly videos on history and an aspect of faith grounding, small group discussion, large group de-brief, and a partnered activation assignment each week. The course is broken into six sections: Root, Realize, Reckon, Respond, Repair, and Resolve. Living Undivided uses biblical references;

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3. Mingo, *Living Undivided.*

4. DeYmaz and Okuwobi, *Multi-Ethnic Christian Primer*.

5. Morrison, *Be the Bridge.*

6. *Living Undivided*, https://www.undivided.com/, Accessed September 1, 2021.

however it does not start with establishing a common understanding of the biblical mandates. This curriculum is robust and would be a good option for a more advanced study by participants who were already inclined in the direction of racial reconciliation and/or had a preaching component to support the engagement. The curriculum is suitable for a virtual gathering and incorporates activation activities between sessions to build relationship.

The Multi-Ethnic Christian Life Primer by Mark DeYmaz and Oneya Fennell Okuwobi is an eight-week guide to "teach believers how to walk, work and worship God together as one in the local church for the sake of the Gospel."[7] The curriculum is primarily focused on the actual development of a multi-ethnic church. It is described as "the first personal devotional and small group study on multi-ethnic life and church designed for people in the pews."[8] Pastors are also encouraged to use the primer for an eight-week sermon series. The daily devotional topics answer one big question each week through the following seven devotional categories: theology, history, considerations, relationships, communication, competence, and reflection. The Multi-ethnic Primer is an excellent format for a congregational approach to understanding the importance of a multi-ethnic church. However, this curriculum would also work best with a sermon series to fully engage participants in answering 'why' the Bible calls us to be a multi-ethnic church. The primary focus of this curriculum is the multi-ethnic church which does not make it easily transferable to non-church groups or churches who want to explore racial reconciliation.

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7. Mark DeYmaz, T*he Multi-ethnic Christian Life Primer*.

8. DeYmaz and Okuwobi, *Multi-Ethnic Christian Primer*, Introduction, iv.

The curriculum selected was *Be the Bridge* (BTB) by Latasha Morrison. This curriculum met all five evaluation parameters: it is biblically based and premised upon Jesus' prayer for unity among believers; for believers to be ambassadors to engage in the ministry of reconciliation; to engage as a multiethnic church; to encourage redemptive leadership; and can be adapted to include local information. Each aspect of the curriculum engages the participant in scripture as it defines terms, discusses assumptions, and challenges values and beliefs. While the curriculum is intended to be discussed between believers who "seek to see racial healing in the body of Christ,"[9] it does not require a preaching component to further underscore the biblical mandates. The curriculum can also be tailored to the group of participants. For example, I tailored the abbreviated introduction to the curriculum to participants in the Charlotte, NC Metro area with relevant examples from this geographic area. Finally, the curriculum is not denominational specific and is designed to be expanded or condensed as time permits.

BTB is one of the most successful curriculums currently being used in the movement of reconciliation. Here is a summary of their five-year impact report:

> Since our founding in 2016, we've evolved into a global movement with a thriving community and a robust collection of resources. That includes **2,000** BTB Groups and counting, an anti-racism training program, more than **74,000** members in our Facebook group, **24,000** downloads of our discussion guides, and countless eyes opened and hearts changed. It's only because of bridge-builders like you that we are able to continue on our mission to empower people and culture toward racial healing, equity and reconciliation.[10]

I participated virtually in the BTB curriculum from October 2020 through June 2021, with a group of 15 participants going through each section once a month. Participating virtually

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9. Be the Bridge, *Leader's Guide 3.0*, 4.

10. Be the Bridge, *Impact Report,* https://bethebridge.com/btb-impact-report/?mc_cid=b5b4a650bc&mc_eid=99f60462d5, Accessed February 14, 2022.

made the sessions easy to access, however, building relationships took time and in some ways was hindered by the sessions being every month instead of more frequently. The long stretches of time in between sessions did not facilitate robust conversation in the first couple of months. Long stretches also initially stifled the engagement process. In some ways, it felt too onerous to have an evolving discussion unresolved for such a long time as the continuity from month to month seemed to have a stop/start/stop pattern. On the positive side, being virtual allowed for more inclusivity. In fact, we had one member who was in Massachusetts join the rest of the group from Charlotte, NC. Over time, the group gelled, and we began to have more in-depth conversations. The group has become friends and is now planning a weekend reunion in July 2022 to explore African American history in Massachusetts.

The format of the BTB curriculum anticipates that participants will read the discussion guide section prior to the group meeting. The group meeting is a time of answering the discussion questions and sharing personal experiences. The guide also provides homework assignments, supporting scripture and additional reading recommendations.

After selecting the curriculum, I recruited a co-facilitator as suggested by the BTB leader's guide. The BTB curriculum recommends having white and Black co-leaders for the training so that the facilitators are modeling the behavior of cooperative leadership to the group. Rev. Dr. Andrew Martin, who is white, is Co-Pastor of West Charlotte Church and an Adjunct Professor of Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, agreed to serve as my co-facilitator.

Part Two: The Participants

Recruiting

The second step of the project was to reach out to pastors in the area who might be interested in the "Modeling Conversations About Race" seminars. I focused on three approaches to recruit: reaching out to leaders of faith-based organizations; personal contacts and referrals. My first outreach was to contact leaders of large organizations representing pastors, churches or faith-based organizations. I initiated contact with three executive directors of diverse groups to enlist their assistance in recruiting pastors.

One executive director (ED 1), a pastor in his mid-late 60s, expressed concern at the following language he described as "inflammatory," contained on the BTB website in the section describing "Our Bridge-Building Philosophy:"

> In these conversations that we're having at Be the Bridge, there's not going to be an even exchange of information where we say, "Hey, I'm going to tell what I know, and you tell me what you know." The fact is history has been erased, hijacked, white-washed, and skewed. We have to set that right with truth-telling. That's where we start. A lot of people coming to this bridge are coming with a lot of misinformation related to history because we don't have the same common memory or shared understanding of history.[11]

We discussed his concern, which was that potential participants would immediately go to the website, read this statement, and get turned off and would not want to participate. As a result of his concerns, I re-wrote the invitation letter to take out the name of the curriculum so that participants would not pre-judge the content (Appendix C). I also selected this statement as one of the first topics for discussion during the seminar to test whether this director's reaction was representative of other white pastors who would be attending the seminar series. ED 1's

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11. Be The Bridge, *Our Philosophy*, https://bethebridge.com/our-philosophy/, Accessed December 6, 2021.

behavior as a gatekeeper is consistent with what Robin Diangelo describes as "white fragility in action."[12] The ED 1 stated that the language used on the website was "a marketing disaster" because it was so inflammatory. He was concerned that the pastors he would recommend would be uncomfortable in the seminar. Vu Le, in his article "Gatekeeper Fragility" discusses how this attitude stems from an assumption that "others are fragile and can't mentally or emotionally handle certain conversations." He goes on to identify three problems with this attitude: gatekeeping progress; stepping on people's autonomy; and blocking people's personal and professional growth.[13] All of these problems occurred in this project as ultimately ED 1 did not refer any participants, even after I made the changes to the letter and made several follow-up inquiries.

The second director (Dir.) I contacted represented a gathering of churches, non-profits, and organizations wanting to transform Charlotte. He is a young white male, in his late 30s. We met for coffee and during our conversation, he stated that pastors in the city "were tired" of talking about racial reconciliation. When I asked what he meant, he said it was an uncomfortable topic and many pastors just didn't know how to discuss it. He also stated that one of his colleagues had seen a podcast and had some concerns about "the theology of Latasha Morrison." I asked him if he could tell me more or share the podcast with me and he promised to do so.

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12. Robin Diangelo, *White Fragility*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 119-122.

13. Vu Le, Nonprofit AF, *Gatekeeper Fragility*, aka Meta-Fragility, the Fragility Around Others Being Too Fragile, October 29, 2019, https://nonprofitaf.com/2019/10/meta-fragility-the-fragility-around-others-being-too-fragile/.

Toward the end of our conversation, this Dir. also asked me if I could introduce him to "Jim,"[14] the senior pastor of the church I attend. He went on to recount a story of just showing up at the church office and requesting to see Jim. The receptionist told him "Rev. Smith" was not available. The Dir. was surprised he could not just "stop in" and mentioned that when he meets a white pastor, it's like they have been friends for years. But when he meets a Black pastor, it takes a while to get to know them. I asked him if he knew why. He said no. I replied that trust must be earned before a Black pastor would automatically engage. This exchange is a great example of the lack of cultural competence by someone with white privilege. This Dir. suffered from "ethnocentrism – "evaluating other people and their culture by the standards of [his] own cultural preferences."[15] As a young white male, he was used to a more casual approach which is not the standard of respect in the Black church. Calling a Black pastor, especially one who is old enough to be his father, by their first name, is considered very disrespectful. The Dir.'s assumption that he could stop by without an appointment bordered on arrogance. As we prepared to leave, I reminded the Dir. about my recruitment for the thesis-project and offered to follow-up after a couple of days. I followed up several times after our conversation, specifically to get the information on the podcast, and to ask for introductions or referrals to other pastors. Neither was forthcoming.

The third director I contacted is the Executive Director of a faith-based non-profit that works with all houses of faith. (ED 2) She was very encouraging and invited me to the organization's Thursday zoom session to speak to participants and encouraged me to send her a

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14. Pseudonym.

15. Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence,* 66.

flyer (Appendix D) that she sent out via email to her membership. I subsequently followed up with her because I wanted to make sure I had gender diversity in the participants. She immediately sent out emails to female pastors introducing me and the project. Out of her initiative I was able to recruit 2 of the 4 female pastors who participated.

I also recruited using my personal contacts: pastors who are friends, pastors who serve on local boards of directors with me, former classmates from seminary, and professors, both current and former.

Many pastors who were unable to attend referred me to other pastors within their network and I followed up with them. In all, I contacted 55 individuals and recruited 18 pastors to participate in the two seminars. Each participant received the letter of invitation with details about the seminar.

The Participants

Of the pastors who agreed to participant, ten were Black, eight were white and four were female. The pastors were local to the Charlotte, NC area and were currently serving as a pastor either full time or part time. The pastors represented the following denominations: United Methodist, Presbyterian; Baptist; Pentecostal, Lutheran, and Non-denominational.

On the day of the first seminar, one pastor called to say he had a sick child at home and would not be able to attend. I received an email late that evening from another pastor who was unable to attend. The first seminar was conducted with 16 pastors present.

The second seminar was conducted with 14 pastors present. One pastor refused to return, after writing me a two-page email citing his objections to the seminar content. One pastor expressed regret that something prevented him from attending the second day but asked for the second half of the materials and filled out the post survey.

Part Three: The Seminars

Due to the time constraints on the pastor's time, I organized the ten sessions into eight components that could be delivered over two, four-hour sessions. The sessions were scheduled from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on two consecutive Thursdays in October. The project was held, in person, on the campus at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. It was important to have a face-to-face conversation because we would be experiencing an abbreviated version of the curriculum and to ensure the participants full attention. I choose the campus of the Seminary to create a safe, neutral space for participants to speak freely.

To facilitate the seminar discussions, I created a PowerPoint to guide the participants though each session (Appendix E). Each participant received one-half of the printed copy of the curriculum the morning of each seminar.[16] Since they would not have an opportunity to preview the curriculum, and to create a starting point for discussions, the curriculum was supplemented with an initial quiz (Appendix F), short videos and a homework assignment germane to the Charlotte, NC geographic area. The videos supplemented information we would have covered during individual sessions such as an overview of discriminatory actions in the U.S. by Phil Vischer,[17] the importance of prophetic lament by Soong-Chan Rah,[18] and a video on reparations

16. I have not included a copy of the curriculum as an appendix as it is the proprietary property of *Be the Bridge.*

17. Phil Vischer, "Race in America, A Holy Post"; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGU wcs9qJXY&t=12s, Accessed December 15, 2021.

18. Soong-Chan Rah, "Prophetic Lament," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhjxTWOJjkI, Accessed December 15, 2021.

by Ta- Nehasi Coates to Congress.[19] The homework assignment was a virtual tour by noted historian Tom Hanchett on redlining in Charlotte, NC.[20]

The participants were seated in small groups of four or five with intentional race and gender diversity present in each group. The participants were re-arranged in different small groups for the second seminar still maintaining diversity in each group. The format of the seminars was ten sections, each grounded in a biblical principle, followed by an explanatory exercise or video. The participants then engaged in small group discussion and a large group de-brief. The subject areas were:

1. Awareness
2. Acknowledgement
3. Lament
4. Shame & Guilt
5. Confession – Redemptive Leadership
6. Forgiveness
7. Repentance
8. Making Amends
9. Reconciliation and Restoration
10. Reproduction

The first session started with an ice breaker. The participants were paired with a person of another race, and each had to tell the other a stereotype about the person's race and where they heard it. Because the numbers were uneven, I sat with a white pastor and he shared with me that he grew up in all white schools and his teachers told him "colored people were not very bright." The ice breaker immediately created tension but also honesty as each person could share what they heard or were told without having to own being the initiator of the bias or discrimination.

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19. Ta Nehasi Coates, "Opening Statement on Reparations at House Hearing," June 19, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcCnQ3iRkys.

20. Tom Hanchett, "Sorting Out New South," July 9, 2020, https://vimeo.com/436840382.

This exercise was also a way to demonstrate that implicit bias and systematic discrimination is present in the DNA of our country based on what each of us have been told.

Each session of the seminar was grounded in a biblical mandate, which was supported by Scripture and presented by Dr. Martin. I presented an overview of each topic followed by a supporting video. After the video, each small group answered 1-2 questions and then reported out in a large group de-brief. The first seminar covered awareness, acknowledgement, lament, and shame and guilt. The second seminar covered "parking lot issues," confession (with an emphasis on redemptive leadership), forgiveness, repentance, making amends, reconciliation and restoration, and reproduction.

For the section on confession, I wanted to emphasis the importance of personal life experiences and redemptive leadership. I interviewed a woman, Jan,[21] who lives in Charlotte (see Appendix A). She is about 77 years old and grew up with her grandparents as active members of the KKK. Jan told us what it was like to have a grandmother who was extremely racist and how that impacted her family. Ultimately Jan shared that "it was the love of Jesus that changed my mother's heart." Jan was a great example of a redemptive leader who knows their past is blemished but instead of hiding it, she has been courageous enough to share her story and to work hard to be a part of the work of racial reconciliation. Jan gave every member of the seminar a copy of William Barber's book, *The Third Reconstruction,* which she said was very transformational in her understanding the plight of marginalized people.

21. Pseudonym, interview by Mary E. Wilson, October 18, 2021.

Observations

The reaction of the participants was consistent with what the leader's guide said to expect and was consistent with my personal experience when I took the course. On the first day, the Black pastors were more vocal than the white pastors. The conversation was spirited and engaging with some emotional reactions. For example, one Black pastor said that he has come to a new understanding of Christianity which has caused him to re-think everything he has ever heard. He believed the Bible should be deconstructed and reconstructed according to "the needs of the people." One white pastor stated that he believed there was not enough conversation about the love of Jesus as a means of changing hearts and minds.

After the first seminar, I received a two-page email from one white pastor accusing me of presenting components of Critical Race Theory (CRT). As discussed in Chapter Three, Literature Review, his objections followed the objections being used in white evangelical churches across the nation: i) identifying the latest taboo as the real problem (i.e. CRT); ii) only personal responsibility exists; systemic racism does not; iii) denial of implicit bias; iv) white privilege doesn't exist because minorities have "benefitted" from being in this country; v) distrust and criticism of white people is unwarranted; vi) lamenting is not productive; and vii) nothing can change the human heart except the gospel.

This pastor clearly demonstrated why this seminar series was needed. As a redemptive leader, it is imperative that each of us be open to learning what we do not know and be open to engaging another perspective. It is very easy to get stuck in the character stage where we are doing activities but not examining our heart. The crucible of transformation cannot occur if each person stays in their echo chamber, never acknowledging the truth of any other message. Redemptive leadership requires courage to acknowledge that there may be something you do not

know or to go deeper and ask "why?' instead of assuming. Engaging information that disagrees with your perspective can only occur if you are willing to engage with someone who may have had a different lived experience. True dialogue can uncover the areas of similarities and differences and allow the seeds of growth. A breakthrough of greater humility can create a level of trust that allows a redemptive leader to then speak into the lives of others.

If only this pastor had returned! He would have seen the Holy Spirit work through reflection, confession, and discussion to move the pastors to places of healing and hope. The first hour of the second seminar was amazing to see the transformation that had occurred as people had taken the time to process the first session. There were several pastors who apologized for "being defensive"; for being "angry and emotional" and for "talking too much." There was also a request from the Black pastors that the white pastors engage and speak up more during this session. The Black pastors said they wanted to hear the feedback and input of everyone in the room.

We went over a list of "parking lot" issues that were mentioned but not discussed from the first session (Appendix G). I wanted to demonstrate to the pastors how these issues would need to be unpacked if we were delivering this curriculum to congregants. These are the "elephants" in the room that must be addressed to build trust and a common understanding. Due to the time limitations, we could not discuss all the issues, but it was a good reminder to the pastors that this was not an intellectual exercise, but a real conversation on race with church members.

Post Survey

In consultation with Dr. Bryan Auday of Gordon College, I prepared a post survey focusing on the following three categories:

1. Knowledge − assessment of what the respondents know.
2. Attitudes − assessment of how the respondents feel about something.
3. Behavior − assessment of what the respondents actually do.

The paper survey was handed out and completed at the end of the second seminar. Some participants choose to fill out the same survey electronically via Survey Monkey. A total of 15 surveys were distributed and returned (Appendix H).

Conclusions

Although it was challenging to recruit participants, the final product was two seminars of fully engaged participants, shared learning, new relationships being formed, and an impactful experience. One of the participants sent this email message "Thank you for your outstanding leadership, facilitation and passion during Modeling a Conversation. The seminar stands as one of the most impactful events in which I have ever participated. Thank you for leading me into awareness, lament, repent and a future look at reparations and restoration."

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this research has been to determine whether a biblically based curriculum will help move a certain group of pastors and lay leaders to have difficult conversations, grow in empathy and confidence and move closer to creating a redemptive multi-ethnic congregation. The growing racial discord in America creates an urgency to create a safe space to have conversations about race. Research indicates that leaders do not know what to say and struggle with where to begin. While there have been many attempts at reconciliation within the church they may not have addressed the underlying biblical reasons for reconciliation or the need for redemptive leadership. This project was designed to introduce pastors and lay leaders to key biblical mandates and a curriculum supporting those mandates which forms a roadmap for unity of the church to inform the ministry of reconciliation by a redemptive leader.

The racial reckoning of 2020 and the explosion of books and articles highlighted the urgency of addressing the role of the church in reconciliation especially as it pertains to the continued growth and sustainability of the multiethnic church. White, evangelical pastors exemplified a lack of understanding and ultimately the lack of courage, as redemptive leaders, to address the glaring issues of the day. Asking the question of "what is the church doing?" led me to seek out a biblical curriculum that could provide a toolkit to have conversations on race from a Christian perspective. Once I researched several available curricula, I determined that *Be the Bridge* curriculum would provide the best framework for a first step conversation on race.

The method of research included a two-day seminar for a select group of pastors and lay leaders who were interested in modeling a conversation on race. The seminars became the

testing ground for my initial hypothesis and the participant post seminar survey results confirmed the key findings of the literature review and confirmed the hypothesis.

Analysis of Results

"Modeling a Conversation on Race" addresses four primary concerns of the hypothesis:

1. The need for participants to be equipped with a biblically based curriculum to guide conversations on race.
2. The desire for participants to be knowledgeable, confident, and well-equipped to move toward a multi-ethnic church.
3. The desire for participants to feel confident, knowledgeable and empathetic about issues of racial reconciliation.
4. The need for participants to be a redemptive leader.

The post seminar survey asked 17 quantitative questions which assessed the knowledge, attitude and behavior of the participants (inclusive of two demographic questions). A traditional 5-point likert scale was used to measure the intensity of response from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In addition, five qualitative questions were asked to provide for more open-ended answers from the participants. The qualitative answers were grouped into categories and then combined into larger groupings until a clear number one ranking emerged. The survey results validated the hypothesis and provided feedback on opportunities for future research.

Importance of Biblical Mandates

The first question to be addressed by this research was the question of understanding the biblical mandates for Christian reconciliation. The research was geared toward pastors and lay leaders to attract a group with a common foundation. Figure 1 demonstrates the importance of Scripture to the discussion of reconciliation.[22] Fifteen participants answered the question "What did you consider to be the most important contribution of the curriculum?" Nine participants

1. See Appendix I for Figures 1-14

said ‘referenced scripture of biblical references; scriptural engagement or biblical engagement.’ The curriculum was premised on the basis of scripture for each of the ten sections.

Figure 2 measures the knowledge gained by the participants. The results indicate 26.6% strongly agree and 53.33% agree that the seminar helped them better understand the biblical mandates of seeking unity; being bridge builders and being redemptive leaders.

Importance of Multi-Ethnic Church

The second question to be addressed is how knowledgeable, confident, and well-equipped participants feel in moving toward a multi-ethnic church. Figure 3 shows that 13.3% strongly agree and 46.67% agree that they have increased their confidence and are more knowledgeable and well-equipped to move toward a multi-ethnic church. Conversations during the seminar often reflected a lack of confidence of what to do when certain topics came up. Just by having a biblical basis to guide the discussion helped to put the issues in the right context.

Figure 3 reflects 60% of the participants strongly agree or agree that they have an increased confidence to explain why the church is called to be multi-ethnic. 20% report that they disagree. One possible cause of disagreement is that some churches are not in areas with a lot of diversity and may not believe they have a way to be multi-ethnic. During the seminar we briefly touched on socioeconomic diversity and the opportunity to be racially reconciled even if the church is not multi-ethnic. This is an area for future research.

The positive response is further explained in Figure 4 which reflects what the participants consider the advantages of moving toward a multi-ethnic church. Fifteen participants answered the question and ten participants responded that such a move would create “the church that God intends”, “reflect God”, “be a better representation of God’s kingdom.” An additional four stated it would “move everyone closer to Jesus” or be “a visual evangelism.”

Figure 5 identifies the top two challenges to moving towards a multi-ethnic church. All 15 participants answered this question. The responses were grouped according to similarity and then tallied to reflect the categories with the highest similar response. The two highest tally responses were awareness and cultural competence. Awareness and cultural competence speak to the attitudes of the participants and their willingness to embrace new information. Awareness, which was listed six times alone, had a total of ten responses which also included such responses as understanding and more conversations about injustice. Cultural competence had the next highest with seven responses and included such responses as "integrating culture," cross-cultural ministry, leadership and developing relationships.

Awareness reflects the many comments heard by the participants about information they had never heard before, or the sharing of comments and perspectives from participants. For example, the video by Tom Hanchett, on redlining in Charlotte, was new information to some participants who were native Charlotteans.

Cultural competence was an interesting category. It demonstrates that the participants understand the difference between white Christian and Black Christian churches and the necessity of appreciating the culture of people who may not be like the majority culture if the church is moving toward multi-ethnic.

Another category worth mentioning is "getting past the hurt/history/forgiveness and accountability." This category had four responses and reflects the importance of acknowledging the hurt and trauma caused by the wall of hostility.

Challenge of Reconciliation

There are three figures which answer the third question of how effectively the "Modeling a Conversation on Race" seminars addressed participants' confidence, knowledge, and sense of

being more understanding of racial reconciliation issues. As the seminars pointed out, it is difficult to address issues of reconciliation without understanding the underlying issues.

Figures 6, 7, and 8 provide more detail on the knowledge gained by the participants. Figure 6 shows that 86.67% of the participants strongly agree or agree that they have a better understanding of the challenges moving toward a multi-ethnic church. This is further unpacked in Figure 7 which shows that 73.34% have a better understanding of the racial injustices facing Black congregants. And Figure 8 demonstrates that 66.67% of the participants have developed greater empathy toward the injustice experienced by Black congregants.

Challenge of Redemptive Leadership

Figures 9-13 reflect the level of knowledge, attitude, and behavior of the participants with respect to moving toward a multi-ethnic church. Figure 9 shows 80% of participants "strongly agree" or "agree" that they feel more confident to start a conversation about race within their church. Figure 10 shows an 80% rate of "strongly agree" and "agree" response to the question of whether they have a better understanding of how to have a conversation about race to take the first steps to move to a multi-ethnic church. Figure 11 shows an 80% response of "agree" that the participant has more knowledge to equip them to move towards a multi-ethnic church.

The percentage changes significantly in Figure 12 when just 35.71 % of the participants state they are less fearful of moving their ministry towards a multi-ethnic church. Of these same participants, 57.14% say they can neither "agree nor disagree" with the statement. Finally, Figure 13 provides interesting narrative to Figures 9-12. Fifteen participants were given the question and one did not answer. Of the remaining fourteen, seven said they were "absolutely," "very likely", while only two said they are not moving toward a multi-ethnic church.

Observations

The participants answered a narrative question about what was the least important contribution of the *Be the Bridge* curriculum (Figure 14). Twelve participants answered the question and three skipped the question. One made a kind joke (the lunch), so we actually have eleven responses. The responses were informative: four stated there was not enough time and five had a variety of comments about biblical interpretation/selection of scripture/and use of videos. The five varied comments indicate, however, a willingness to engage in more dialogue. This was gratifying as it indicates nine out of eleven would like to have had more opportunity to dig into the curriculum and the issues raised.

Conclusions

Summary

Scripture provides the underlying mandates for unity so that the church can demonstrate the glory of God's reconciliation and redemptive power through the multiethnic church. Scripture clearly demonstrates that God created one humanity and Christ's redemptive sacrifice was intended to reunite humanity into one new people. Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is that all of his disciples will be reconciled into one church so that the world will know the power and love of God. The wall of hostility, historically between the Jews and the Gentiles and present day, between white, evangelical Christians and Black Christians has been torn down spiritually and God calls on His people to tear it down literally.

A curriculum like *Be the Bridge* is an excellent first step for a pastor or lay leader to use to begin modeling a conversation on race. It is a biblically sound curriculum that allows time for participants to build relationship and to go through a process of listening, sharing, and learning. The curriculum does not require anyone to be an expert on any topic but only to have an open

heart to what Scripture says about who we are and who God calls us to be. A roadmap is already established, and each step is open for exploration. Through sitting together and tackling topics one by one, participants create a building block of information. The curriculum invites participants to dig into God's Word and to explore what does it mean to be in hostility and what does it mean to be reconciled. The participants can decide whether to supplement the curriculum with information about the locale in which they are located and/or more current event topics. It is an excellent first step opportunity to build relationship and to develop a common goal of unity through reconciliation.

Having this interactive group meet in a church would provide a safe space for participates to share their feelings and experiences which is very important to the process. The format is also conducive to virtual meetings and small group discussions. While the curriculum does not require it, I would encourage the pastors and lay leaders to also preach and teach on the same topics so that the entire church is hearing the same message even as a smaller group actively engages in more intimate conversation and relationship building.

The lens through which we read and interpret God's Word must not be what is politically or economically expedient but what is the plain Word of God that brings Him glory and honor. Enslaved people knew of the liberator God and maintained faith that the same God would liberate them. White, evangelical Christians sought the God of abundance and prosperity and crafted a religion to support their individualistic goals. Theologians, ministers and activists have called for reconciliation and even advocated for the multi-ethnic church. But none have laid out a pathway that takes into consideration the core requirements of truth, forgiveness, and commitment to change. White, evangelical leaders have pledged relationship and prayer but few have taken a stand that puts them at risk, to go through a crucible and grow personally as

redemptive leaders and thereby impart hope to others. The concern has been more about "what will I lose?" rather than "how can I glorify God?"

The Black church remains the church of reconciliation and social justice – sharing in both relationship and systemic change efforts. They have walked in faith and seen God's hand as liberator and continue to work for unity and justice. The white, evangelical church is at a crossroads. It is still in the character-building phase of redemptive leadership. It is time to focus on being the church not just ministering to the physical needs of people. There is a cry for the church to lead the reconciliation effort but that requires risk and possibly suffering but with it comes greater understanding and deep heart change that will be transformational. As the white, evangelical church moves toward a new era of disciplining, it can become a transformational redemptive leader in the movement for reconciliation and unity through modeling conversations about race from a biblical perspective.

Redemptive leadership is required for a first step toward moving to a multi-ethnic church. A leader who is ready to acknowledge their own shortcoming or bias and to withstand the scrutiny and criticism can empower others to engage. It takes courage to be out in front and a redemptive leader understands there will be challenges and risks. But the opportunity to lead the church to be the unified and reconciled church Christ envisioned is too great an opportunity to miss. A successful redemptive leader will bring others along on the journey and this curriculum is a great first step.

Considerations for future research

Several recommendations emerge from this research. First, it would be helpful to conduct a pre-survey of pastors and lay leaders to understand where they are currently in their decision making about moving towards a multi-ethnic ministry. This would help understand

what they have done, where they are in their own personal journey and assist with the preparation to tailor the workshop or seminar to address any specific issues identified.

Second, it would be helpful to have a longer-term commitment to participation. The three curricula I researched each had a commitment of 6-12 sessions which could extend from 6-9 weeks (or months) depending upon the curriculum. The intent of this research was to provide a high-level overview of what is possible, but it is imperative that the participants be willing to make a longer-term commitment to fully engage the materials. Each section of the BTB curriculum could have been a couple of hour discussion to flesh out context and concepts. Even among pastors and lay leaders there is a need to fully engage the scripture and understand the biblical context so that the participants can have a rich dialogue about the content.

Third, it is very important to build relationship during any reconciliation work. The wall of hostility did not come down between inanimate articles, but between people. People need to get to know one another and that requires work outside the workshop or seminar where people can meet, engage, and share life in some way. Even a virtual experience could pair up people for an interim engagement one on one so that people have the opportunity to interact with someone of a different background.

Fourth, the definition of multi-ethnic can be limiting for some congregations because of their geographic location. During the seminars, we briefly touched on socioeconomic diversity and what it would mean to be racially reconciled. This is an area for future definition and exploration of what it would mean for churches who may not be multi-ethnic in membership. There is still an opportunity to exhibit unity and reconciliation through ministry to those who may be socioeconomically different and/or to support systemic change in the area of racial justice.

Sixth, I recommend follow-up after six weeks to see whether the participants have taken the opportunity to engage in any new practices as a result of the seminars or workshops or have engaged in building any relationships with someone who is culturally, ethnically, or socioeconomically different.

Personal Reflections

What I learned from this research is that in order for the church to be unified there must first be reconciliation. And reconciliation cannot occur until the parties on either side of the wall of hostility confess their sins and give forgiveness. Once that is done, personal relationships can be formed and this new, unified church can then work together to tear down the remaining vestiges of the wall of hostility that are embedded in systems. Only then can the church be truly unified when all parties experience the love of Christ and all flourish under that love.

I am grateful for the opportunity to complete this research, as I have grown in my desire to work towards unity and reconciliation and to be a more redemptive leader. It has been emotionally draining to go through the history of slavery in America and to fully understand the complicity of the white, evangelical church. I now understand so much more about how that history has informed opinions and behaviors on both sides of the wall of hostility. I am amazed at how far we have strayed from God's Word and who He has called us to be. And yet I am so hopeful because Jesus knew what we, as Christians, would be facing and cared enough the night before his death to pray for us and to give us guidance – be unified. Such an opportunity to focus on what I can do instead of being angry about what was done, leaves me with a more positive and hopeful spirit that I can do the work God has called all of us to embrace.

APPENDIX A: JAN'S STORY

Interviewer: Mary E. Wilson
Interviewee: Jan[1], 75 year-old white female living in South Charlotte, NC
Date: Interview conducted at Jan's home on October 18, 2021

Mary: Thank you so much for being willing to talk to me and just kind of share a little bit about your background. So tell me where did you grow up?

Jan: I grew up in Arkansas, near Oklahoma. Dad was a Methodist minister. I've moved 20 times up to this time in my life. So I've moved a lot. But we went from the east side 'cause I was born actually in Memphis, TN, 'cause it was the closest hospital. But Earl, Arkansas, where I was first. They talk about taking my carriage up to the 35 steps they had to get up to the church. And then I ended up in Forest City, Arkansas, not Forest City but Fort Smith Arkansas, which is on the Oklahoma side. So, I lived all across the northern part of Arkansas. That's my home.

Mary: Ok, and where were your parents from?

Jan: My mother was from Louisiana. I'm not sure where she was born, but she was from Welch, Louisiana, that was the town that I knew and knew my grandparents.

Mary: And your dad?

Jan: My dad grew up, he was born in 1904 in Oklahoma, when it was an Indian territory. It was not even a state. And so, that's where he lived a lot of his life in Oklahoma, and it was right on the Oklahoma, Arkansas border. Siloam Springs area. And so, he'd go back and forth.

Mary: You mentioned at one point [during our Be the Bridge group meeting], that you had actually seen pictures of your grandparents and they were dressed in Klan robes. Which set of grandparents, was that?

Jan: This was my mother's parents from Louisiana.

Mary: And can you tell me a little bit about them? What were they like?

Jan: My grandfather died in his late 60s, maybe 70. I'm not even sure how old he was. He had a heart attack and died very quickly. So I didn't know him really well. So my grandmother was the primary one from that side. So the picture you are referring to, my mother was eight years old with two people, and you can tell they are in the Klan outfit and they had taken off the hats. And it is my grandmother and grandfather.

---

[1] Pseudonym

Mary: Well, did you know your grandparents?

Jan: I knew my grandmother real well. And I knew my grandfather. I remember when he died, they laid him out in the casket at the house and all of us grandchildren, there were 12 of us, we all had to parade by and look at him. I remember that when he died.

Mary: Did your mom ever talk about your grandparents being in the Klan?

Jan: No, I don't think she had to say much. When we would go south, when we go to Welsh, Louisiana to visit my grandmother, she would use the N word all the time. And she actually had a lady that worked there, an African American lady. And what she paid her was whatever she would scrape off of her plates or any leftover food of any kind in a bucket in her icebox. At that time it was an ice box probably. And that's what she would pay for eight hours of work a day.

So that you realized was really negating to a person and then you go to the church and it was, she'd say, this is only whites! And then you'd see the cemetery and you'd actually see the railroad where she would never go on the other side of the railroad.

Mary: And the other side of the railroad was?

Jan: African Americans. It was somebody that was not like her, you know.

Mary: Did she ever talk about why it was like that, or did she give you any understanding of what she thought about African Americans?

Jan: I don't think so, but I've got the impression that that's how her parents treated people. I mean, I really think if you talk with any of the neighbors in the area, they would say the same thing to you. I mean, there was a peer pressure there. I mean, I think they felt like they were being threatened by African Americans who were no longer slaves. And I think they just felt like they had to create their own environment where they were in charge and in control.

Mary: And did they ever talk about why black people were treated that way from a religious perspective, like in church? Did you ever hear them talk about that?

Jan: Not religious. I mean, the common phrase I heard, if not for my grandmother, but from people in Welch or even in Arkansas: “They're just not bright. They don't have the intelligence, they're… they can't move forward, they can't be better because they're not…God didn't create them any better. So we just got to keep them down, you know?

Mary: And did your Mom ever talk about how she felt about that, or did she just accept that also, as this is just the way it is?

Jan: The one story my mother told me, and she would talk more in stories than specific things. Like you and I would say ‘racism is bad,’ you know she never said things like that.

But what she did do was she went to a seminary in Nashville, TN to become a Christian educator. And as soon as she got through, they wanted to do some volunteer work. So they took her in deep in south Louisiana. And it was an African American church and mother was running the vacation Bible school. And my grandmother came in the car. And she told Grace [my mother], "She says you're not allowed to work with people like this. What are you doing? I let you get educated, but you're not supposed to work with people like this." And put her in the car and took her home.

So that's what my mother saw. Now to take it a step further, my mother was the other example. We had Chinese, we had Vietnamese, we had African American. I mean there was always some different nationality at our house. I mean, my mother opened her door and fed people. You know from the day I was alive anyway. I mean, I would say my mother really opposed what her parents were.

Mary: How do you think she came to that understanding? Given the fact that she grew up with parents who were, so clearly convinced that there needed to be separation?

Jan: I've always thought, I don't know if I've ever heard her tell me how it happened, but I do think it was her relationship with Jesus Christ. I really do believe that when she read the scripture, she couldn't balance that with what her mother was doing, and her parents had been. I think my dad had an influence on that because he had the other thing he had seen is he had a sister who died at 101 and she had a Native American boyfriend and my Gran father told her explicitly, "Don't bother coming home if you're gonna be with him. That's unacceptable." So he had seen a different kind of racism or, you know, prejudice bias, whatever you want to call it. So, I think between the two of them when they started really wanting to be in the ministry, going through seminary and all that. I think it changed both of them . I think both of them looked at and said, "Is this really what Jesus wants?"

Mary: That's wonderful. What about your relatives on your mom's side or dad's side that are still living?

Jan: My mom's sisters and all are gone. But the cousins, yes, I know the cousins.

Mary: And what's their perspective on one race relations.

Jan: Yeah, one recently died and she lived in Houston, TX. And I would imagine she was racist. I don't know if I've ever talked with her about it. She was a pretty closed person. But I do have cousins that were from the New Mexico area, where my mother's sister lived. She's one of my favorite people in the world. She lives out in Las Vegas now and I think she and her siblings are all very open. Their parents are all gone now.

Mary: I want to talk a little bit about your experience and how it was for you to share this information because you have been very open and forthcoming. What prompted you to talk about this?

Jan: I really think it was my mother's and father's example of always accepting everybody and being loving to everybody. They didn't show prejudice. They just didn't. I mean I have a funny story about my mother when she was 93, she died at 96. And they were looking for a new person, and she had really been connected to an African American nurse there at this facility, it was a Methodist facility she was in. And her mother, this nurse's mother, needed a job. And mom had lost her caregiver for a while, so she came to interview her. Well, I guess the lady came…one at 7:00 o'clock and mother wasn't even awake yet, so she had to get up. But then she came in and she smelled like smoke. And my mother said, you know, I just don't know if I can sleep with her in the house. And I don't know. And she referred to it kind of "what she was." So, I think there was still some anxiety there. But it wasn't anything she would ever verbally say to anybody or ever hurt somebody. But I think there was still a piece of her that, you know.

Mary: Still some anxiety about race?

Jan: Race. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was one thing to talk about it, be kind and nice to everybody and everything, but then to have in your house all the time, right? It was a little more difficult for her and that at 93, you know.

Mary: So, have you had what has been your experience in telling people about your background? Has anybody ever reacted to you, you know, negatively or with surprise? What has been some of the reactions?

Jan: I honestly think I've said it mostly in groups where I feel like they would accept it. What I did do just the other day and I've been thinking about what I can do to further it is I have a guy that's coming now, it's my current handyman (they come and go so quickly). He thought when I was saying something, he said. "Oh yeah, those blacks, they just want everything, you know, why don't they stop asking? Why don't they stop?" And later I brought it up and I said just to give you my view on that. I said, do you realize they can't buy house anywhere they want to in the city? There are areas that realtors will not sell to them because they're black. And he said " no." So in my opinion, I kind of opened his eyes. I'm hoping to give him Dr. Barber's book so he can read that and see how [the] legislator has changed so many different rules and stuff like that. But, I do think that's how the change is gonna come. I think when we hear things from other people, I mean, and he was mad. I mean, it was evident to me. I mean he said, "you know, those blacks, they just never gonna be happy, are they?" And I just said, well, would you be happy if you couldn't buy a house wherever you wanted to? And then there's education. There's a whole bunch of other things, that I didn't say anything more about. But he was really bumfuzzled about it. He really listened to me and said, "wow, I really didn't know that." So maybe I've opened a door there that maybe I can say a few things, but I think that's how I can influence people.

Mary: And you've got credibility. That's the thing is that you've got credibility because you have a lived experience and you're able to speak into someone else's experience.
And you can just tell them "I've had better experiences with people that you may not know about and I also know some of the pitfalls that they've had to deal with" so that makes you credible.

Jan: I told him, women at my church or people at my church have told me over and over they cannot buy a house where they want to buy, you know? And I said that isn't right! I mean, every person should have the right, if they've got the money and the resources, (that brings up a whole …jobs. And I mean that there's right that opens up a whole can of worms.)

Mary: It's a whole pyramid system of problems.

Jan: Yes, problems just like the health care with COVID, I mean, you know not good.

Mary: This experience in your life has inspired you because you've really become an activist. And tell me how that happened?

Jan: Well, there's lots of issues to be involved in and I'm on an environmental committee, I mean I believe in the environment, and I think we've got to do something. But the thing that's inspired me and I really do think it goes back to my grandmother. I really think that that horrendous view of that picture and realizing that I actually had it in my background. That somebody would hate like that and would not want to be around somebody who lived just across a railroad track. I mean, it just doesn't sound like Jesus Christ at all to me, it just doesn't make any sense.

So for me, it's something and the biggest change I've had since I moved here was reading Dr. Barber's book. Seeing what he says, in fact, I would be glad to give you books to take if any of the preachers want copies.

Mary: That is only that would be wonderful!

Jan: Yeah. I don't know if I have enough, but I'll get them, and you can give me names and I'll mail it to them. But I'll give you what I have. Because I that is the biggest opener as far as racial relations that I've seen. And I have to say, I lived 35 years in California and that's the one of the most open. I mean, there's racism there, but it isn't anything like,… you wouldn't get away with the housing there. I mean, there's just too many. I guess you call them liberal or whatever you want to call them. People that are not gonna allow that to happen. So, 35 years in California, it wasn't until I got here that I really began to see it again.

Mary: You started seeing it more in Charlotte when you got here?

Jan: Yeah, when I got here and then there was, you know evidence of it I mean like. Going to my grandson's baseball game and I passed some cheerleaders that were out there practicing, and there was actually an African American girl in there. "Well, those ugly black people," that I mean that that those girls were just bashing and doing plain racism right with that girl standing there.

Mary: Oh my goodness.

Jan: And I said something to them. I said 'please don't talk that way. I said talk to your advisor and find out if that's what you're supposed to be saying' and they kind of looked at me funny and I'm sure they laughed as soon as I left. That's when you know there's family racism. It isn't just those girls didn't come up with that. Just like I didn't come up with my views on it. Right. It's what I saw and what I heard.

Mary: So family influence is important?

Jan: Yes.

Mary: So, what else would you want someone to know about your experience growing up in a family that clearly had some racist roots, learning about who Christ is and who he wants us to be, and being an activist? Is that what? What else would you want someone to know about that? Is that a path you would recommend people? Would you say it's too hard, too costly, or are you glad that you have gone in that direction?

Jan: I'm really glad I've gone in that… when I first started this with Dr. Barber. My daughter says "I work with blacks in my school" and she's worked in professional programs with them as a teacher and stuff, and she said "that's not what's driving all this. You don't know what you're talking about, Mom. You don't know." She is now turned 360˚. She now espouses the things that I say. But when I first said them…. She has friends now that look at her and say "Well, I can't buy where you live. I mean, they wouldn't sell it to [me]." And so she's actually found some people that you know, really [can share their story]. So I do think it makes a difference. And I think you. I think it's almost like the environment. Well, it is like the environment, only worse it's people. We've got to do something. I mean, even if I don't accomplish everything it's just so important that we begin to understand what we've done to a group of people. I mean, just like we did to the Native Americans. I mean, we're nobody deserves to be in charge of somebody else. Nobody. Read the Bible, read Jesus and I mean Jesus told us he told us how to live. And if we don't do that?

Mary: The Bible is our guide.

Jan: It is, and it can tell us the right pathway. It can. It can show us how to do it.

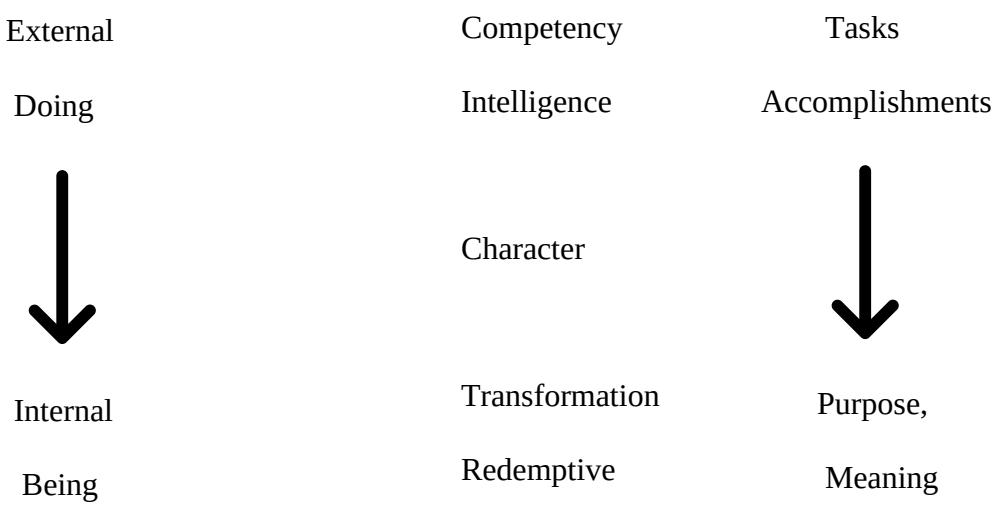
Mary: Thank you so much.

APPENDIX B: REDEMPTIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL

Stages of Redemptive Leadership Development[2]

Stage 1	Competency
Stage 2	Principles
Stage 3	Character
Stage 4	Transformational
Stage 5	Redemptive

Graphic representation of the five stages of the Redemptive Leadership Model:



1. Harvey Powers, Redemptive Leadership, 144-157.

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Mary E. Wilson
D.Min. Candidate
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary

September 6, 2021

Name
Church
Address
City, NC

RE: Racial Reconciliation Seminar

Dear _____:

You are cordially invited to participate in a racial reconciliation journey hosted at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Southeast Campus entitled "Modeling Conversations on Race."

I am a candidate in the Doctor of Ministry "Redemptive Leadership and the Multi-Ethnic Church" Program and I need your help!

As part of my thesis project, I am presenting a series of seminars using a Biblically based curriculum to engage local Pastors and church leaders in a discussion about how the church can be a bridge to racial reconciliation. I am proud to call Charlotte home for the past 32 years. And as a member of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and a participant on several faith-based boards, I know what an important role the faith community has in our city.

I believe there are many people, in Charlotte, who are working on and want to do the work of racial reconciliation. However, I also believe these conversations can be very challenging and polarizing. My hope is that the people of God can come together, in a safe space and have candid conversations using a curriculum based on Biblical principles.

Dr. Drew Martin, Co-Pastor of West Charlotte Church and I will be co-facilitating two seminars. The seminars will be held from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm each Thursday, October 21st and 28th. Participants are requested to attend both sessions. Lunch will be provided. I know this is a big time commitment but this work is so vitally important!

For example, we will discuss the importance of "Awareness". What has transpired in our community that separates us? How do we look at it from a Biblical lens using 2 Corinthians 5:14-21? What does God say about reconciliation?

[14] For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. [15] And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. [16] So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! [18] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. [21] God made him who had no sin to be sin[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This invitation only opportunity will allow you to strengthen the ways you bring interracial healing and transformation into your sphere of influence by

- developing greater awareness of God's desire for people from every tongue, tribe, and nation to form a unified body in Christ;
- developing tangible steps to take in order to transform your current views and vision regarding racial diversity;
- having your assumptions and stereotypes challenged and your worldview expanded; and

The seminars will be limited to 20 participants so that we can engage in small group and one on one dialogue, socially distanced and in a safe space, to allow questions and stories to be shared as we build relationships that may not naturally occur.

For more information or to register, please email me at mwilson2@gordonconwell.edu or
C all 704-819-0345

Blessings,

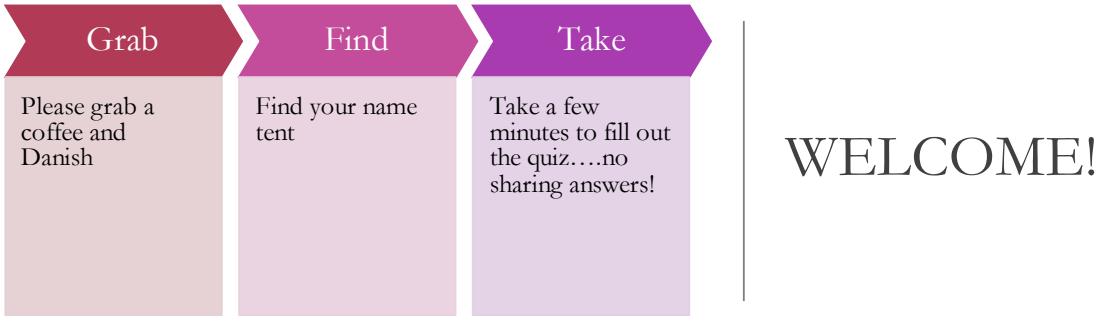
Mary E. Wilson, JD, MACL

APPENDIX D: FLYER FOR SEMINARS

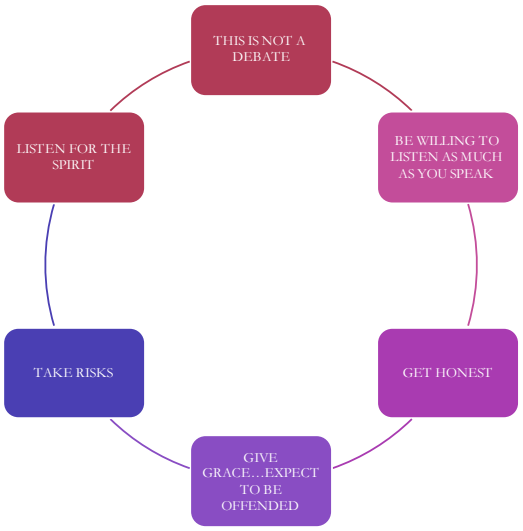
APPENDIX E: POWERPOINT FOR SEMINARS

DAY ONE

Modeling a Conversation On Race
MARY E. WILSON, JD, MACL, D.MIN. CANDIDATE
DR. DREW MARTIN, CO - PASTOR, WEST CHARLOTTE CHURCH
ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, GORDON - CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



GROUND RULES


THIS IS NOT A DEBATE
BE WILLING TO LISTEN AS MUCH AS YOU SPEAK
GET HONEST
GIVE GRACE…EXPECT TO BE OFFENDED
TAKE RISKS
LISTEN FOR THE SPIRIT

Listening Exercise

Choose 1 person you do not know

Person 1: Sit across from person 2 and introduce yourself and share one negative stereotype about a person of the opposite race. Where did you first learn/hear about that stereotype?

Person 2: Please do not speak, just listen.

Switch.

2 mins. each

Why should we "Model a Conversation on Race?"

- God calls us to be one multitude
- Racial Divide exists in our country and continues to grow
- The church has been complicit in the racial divide
- God calls us to be reconcilers

Biblical Mandate compels the Church

To address racial reconciliation:

- to build unity
- to be God's ambassadors
- to be bridge builders

Biblical Mandates

UNITY John 17:20-23	AMBASSADORS 2 Corinthians 5:20	BRIDGE BUILDERS Acts 13:47
• My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,[21] that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—[23] I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.	• So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"	• For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

Racial Divide

*** Black women die 3 times more often giving birth**

*** Black Americans are dying at a disproportionate rate from COVID-19**

*** Black students face disproportionate school suspension rates**

*** Black men and women live shorter lives**

*** Black median household income trails other races**

*** Black unemployment rate among highest**

*** Black homeownership rates remain lowest in US**

*** Four Fortune 500 CEOS are black**

*** Black poverty rate more than double white rate**

*** Black men are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than white men**

Source: https://www.usatoday.com/indepth/news/2020/06/18/12charts-racial-disparities-persist-across-wealth-health-and-beyond/3201129001/

Complicity of the Church

* White Christian Europeans used the Bible to create racial divides to support economic endeavors

* Christians pursued freedom from imperial power yet equated liberty with whiteness only and bondage with blackness

* Division of the church over slavery

North – Jesus teachings proved slavery, based on race, was immoral

South – pointed to the story of Ham as evidence of God's curse on Black people; manipulated the Bible to support slavery

* Jim Crow laws created a new social order elevating white supremacists to power

- Violence and terror used to enforce de facto segregation; often with church in full support
- Estimated that 40,000 ministers were members of the Ku Klux Klan

* Church noticeably absent during the Civil Rights Movement

- Martin Luther King Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

• Rise of the Religious Right equates evangelicalism with whiteness and the Republican Party

Source: *Color of Compromise* , Jemar Tisby

The church has been complicit

What is the One Thing You Wish White Evangelicals Knew About Racial Reconciliation?

Thabiti Anyabwile

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik1z7yCa6ic

Why "Model a Conversation on Race?"

- The racial divide is growing
- To consider a biblically based curriculum to equip leaders
- To understand the role of redemptive leadership
- To understand first steps to a multi ethnic church

This seminar series is a 30,000 foot overview

- Curriculum designed to be experienced over 8-10 sessions
- It is NOT intended to be a debate
- There will be rabbit holes….and these are good opportunities for exploration
- This is a starting point…

BE THE BRIDGE by LATASHA MORRISON

Biblical Principles for Racial Reconciliation

- Awareness
- Acknowledgement and Lament
- Shame and Guilt
- Confession > Redemptive Leadership
- Forgiveness
- Repentance
- Making Amends
- Reconciliation and Restoration
- Reproduction

Biblical Principle: Awareness of God's Truth

Colossians 1:1922

- [19] For God in all his fullness
  was pleased to live in Christ,
  [20] and through him God reconciled
  everything to himself.
  He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth
  by means of Christ's blood on the cross. (NLT)

James 2:89

- [8] Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
  [9] But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law. (NLT)

Awareness of Truth

Is this true?

"The fact is history has been erased, hijacked, white-washed, and skewed. We have to set that right with truth-telling."

Let's check your answers to the quiz.

Awareness of Truth

Is this true?

"The fact is history has been erased, hijacked, white-washed, and skewed. We have to set that right with truth-telling."

Let's check your answers to the quiz.

Small group discussion 15 mins.

What surprised you in the quiz?

Is it possible other information has been omitted, white-washed or skewed?

What are some examples of things you were note taught in school but have learned?

Large group report out
5 mins.

Biblical Principle: Acknowledgementand Lament

Acknowledgement

Deuteronomy 5:8 -10

8 "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind, or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. 9 You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. 10 But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those [a] who love me and obey my commands. (NLT)

Acknowledgement: an invitation to understand

How do we acknowledge the truth of racism?

Phil Vischer video: Holy Post

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGUwcs9qJXY

Small group discussion 15 mins.

Was there anything in the video you did not know?

Biblical Principle:
Acknowledgement and**Lament**

Lament

James 4:8-10

[8] Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. [9] Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. [10] Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor. (NLT)

Lament:
an expression of deep grief, sorrow, or regret over something unsatisfactory, unreasonable, or unjust.

Prophetic Lament

Dr. Soong Chan Rah

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhjxTWOJjkI

The New York Times

A Quiet Exodus: Why Black Worshipers Are Leaving White Evangelical Churches

"We were willing to give up our preferred worship style for the chance to really try to live this vision of beloved community with a diverse group of people," she said. "That didn't work."

As the headlines of the outside world turned to police shootings and protest, little changed inside majority-white churches. Black congregants said that beyond the occasional vague prayer for healing a divided country, or a donation drive for law enforcement, they heard nothing.

Small group discussion over lunch.
2 groups

30 mins.

What does acknowledgement and lament mean in the context of racial reconciliation?

How would you demonstrate lament as a church?

Large group report out
10 mins.

Biblical Principle: Shame and Guilt

Daniel 9:1-19

"Lord, you are in the right; but as you see, our faces are covered with shame. This is true of all of us, including the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, scattered near and far, wherever you have driven us because of our disloyalty to you.[8] O LORD, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. (NLT)

Ezra 9:6

[6] I prayed, "O my God, I am utterly ashamed; I blush to lift up my face to you. For our sins are piled higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached to the heavens." (NLT)

Shame is feeling unworthy of love and belonging because of something we've done, not done, or had done to us.

Guilt is feeling discomfort and unease in response to doing something (or not doing something) that violates our internal or communal moral code.

Shame says, "Who I *am*/who we *are* is wrong."

Guilt says "I/we *did* something wrong.

Opportunity for communal restoration

In an interview with [John] Cummings the current owner of the [Whitney Plantation]was asked why a White man came to be involved in revealing the truth of the plantation's history. 'Well, don't you remember?' he replied. 'It was a White man who caused all of this.' In that same interview he was asked if he felt guilty. He said he didn't feel guilty anymore, that he'd moved past the guilt into a stage of lament, and though he admitted that he couldn't do anything to change the injustices of the past, he hoped to change some of the effects of slavery by looking at the truth and 'owning it.'"

"White Guilt"

Should we stop using this term?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsbOGAgaV-M

Small Group "A" Discussion 15 mins.

What is the shame and guilt of racism?

Do you agree that as Christians, we bear a burden of guilt for the collective sin of our nation? Why or why not?

Small Group "B" Discussion 15 mins.

Should we stop using the term "white guilt"?

What purpose can communal shame and guilt serve as they relate to redemption and restoration?

Large group report out 10 mins.

End of Part One

Thank you!

HOMEWORK:

Please look at Tom Hanchett video: Sorting Out the New South City

https://vimeo.com/436840382

We will discuss it as our first exercise next Thursday.

We will meet back next **Thursday, Oct. 28th at 9:45 am**

for the second half of the 30,000 foot flyover!

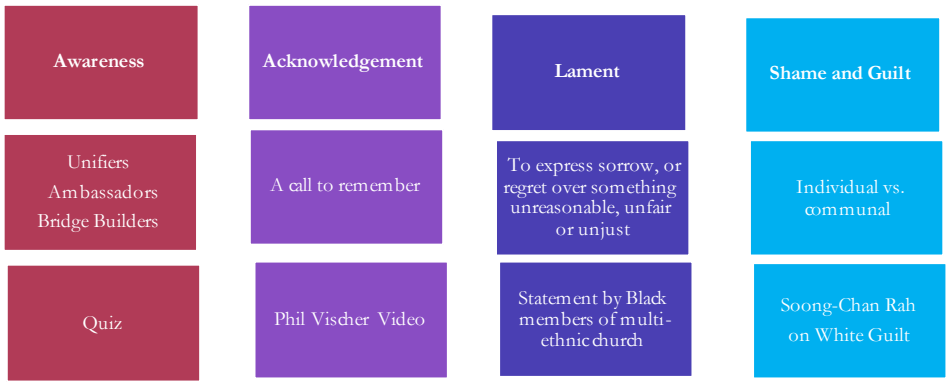
POWERPOINT

SEMINAR DAY TWO

Modeling a Conversation On Race

MARY E. WILSON, JD, MACL, D.MIN. CANDIDATE
DR. DREW MARTIN, CO - PASTOR, WEST CHARLOTTE CHURCH
ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, GORDON - CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Reflections on Part One: Biblical Mandates



Modeling a Conversation

Tom Hanchett Video

1. Why was watching this important?
2. Could you understand how laws impacted Black home ownership? Intergenerational wealth?
3. Could you empathize?
4. How did you feel individually? Communally?

Biblical Principles for Racial Reconciliation

Awareness

Acknowledgement

Lament

Shame and Guilt

Confession > Redemptive Leadership

Forgiveness

Repentance

Making Amends

Reconciliation and Restoration

Reproduction

Biblical Principle: Confession

James 5:16

16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. (NLT)

Proverbs 28:13

13 People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy. (NLT)

1 John 1:9-10

9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. (NLT)

Confession requires awareness of our sin, acknowldgement of it, and the desire to move past the shame and guilt.

Requires great humility

and deep vulnerability

and can be **redemptive**

Redemptive Leadership: Influencing through who we are

"Effective spiritual ministry flows out of being, and God is concerned with our being."

"As a leader, you should recognize that God is continually developing you over a lifetime. His top priority is to conform you to the image of Christ for ministry with spiritual authority. Enduring fruitfulness flows out of being."

The Making of a Leader/Dr. Robert Clinton

Redemptive Leadership

Redemptive leaders *guide* others into *finding* and *releasing the power of their own redemptive stories* in their successes, failures, wounds and tragedies. They, then, are powerfully *able to speak hope* and healing, by God's grace, *into the hearts of others*.

Influencing those whom we touch to significantly *experience God's redemptive power* in their lives so that they may be *unleashed to live* life to their full potential.

Source: Dr. Rod Cooper, Professor, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary

Jan's Story

Jan is 77 years old and is originally from Arkansas. She has lived in Charlotte for 20 years after leaving an emotionally abusive marriage. Jan remembers her grandparents as racist, mean spirited and vile….and members of the Klu Klux Klan.

Listen to Jan's story: _____

Small group "A" discussion 15 mins.

Do you have people in your church who may have a similar story to Jan?

How could sharing their story be redemptive?

Small group "B" discussion 15 mins.

Comment from the New York Times article:

"As I prayed about it as I talked with black pastor friends of mine, I realized I don't really understand the depth of the pain they feel," he said. "This is personal to them — it was history to me. I would talk to my friend, and it was personal to him because it was his great-grandfather."

How could this confession be redemptive?

Small group "C" discussion 15 mins.

Psalm 51:16-17

You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.
You do not want a burnt offering.
17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.
You will not reject a broken and repentant heart,
O God.

How does this Psalm speak to the importance of redemption?

Large group report out
5 mins.

Biblical Principle: Forgiveness

Luke 17:3-4 New Living Translation

3 So watch yourselves!

"If another believer [a] sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. 4 Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive."

Ephesians 4:31-32 New Living Translation

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.
32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

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32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

We are all guilty and in need of forgiveness (Romans 3:23)

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."

C.S. Lewis

Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude."

Martin Luther King Jr.

Small Group "A" discussion 15 mins.

Confession of sin by the perpetrators and forgiveness of sin by those who have been sinned against are both indispensable in the process of racial reconciliation.

Discuss what you think would happen if either of these was lacking?

Small Group "B" discussion 15 mins.

Confession of sin by the perpetrators and forgiveness of sin by those who have been sinned against are both indispensable in the process of racial reconciliation.

What changes about the relational dynamic when both are present?

Small Group "C" discussion 15 mins.

How do you forgive when those you are trying to forgive continuously hurt you?

What does it mean to maintain a "permanent attitude" of forgiveness in this situation?

Large group report out 10 mins.

Biblical Principle: Repentance

2 Corinthians 7:11

10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.
11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. (NIV)

Ephesians 2:14-16

14 For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.15 He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. 16 Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. (NLT)

Prayer by Daniel Hill, at the funeral service of Laquan McDonald who was shot and killed by a Chicago police officer in 2014.

"We repent of the violent acts done in the name of racism.

We repent of the apathy that has caused so many of us to sit on the sidelines and just watch in a bewildered state.

We confess everything that has gotten in your way…

We confess the ways that our white supremacy has infected our judicial system, the way it has infected our police systems where it has minimized the lives of other people."

Let Justice Roll Down by John Perkins

"I think many of us want forgiveness without repentance. I sense this so much as I try to establish relationships with my white brethren in the South. I find they want my relationship, but they want more to quickly forget the brutality and the injustice that their people put upon many of us in the name of Christianity. And that's the frightening part."

Let Justice Roll Down, John Perkins

Small group "A" discussion 15 mins.

This prayer implies that no group is exempt from the need to repent.

Whites, the main creators and benefactors of racialized society, must repent of their personal, historical, and social sins.

Agree or Disagree?

Small group "B" discussion 15 mins.

This prayer implies that no group is exempt from the need to repent.

Black [people and other oppressed groups] must repent of their anger and whatever hatred they hold toward white [people] and the system.

Agree or Disagree?

Small group "C" discussion 15 mins.

What can repentance look like?

How can confession of this perspective operate as redemption?

Large group report out
15 mins.

Biblical Principle: Making Amends

Deuteronomy 15:12-15

12 If any of your people—Hebrew men or women—sell themselves to you and serve you six years, in the seventh year you must let them go free. 13 And
when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed. 14 Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to
them as the LORD your God has blessed you. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this
command today. (NIV)

Numbers 5:7

They must confess their sin and make full restitution for what they have done, adding an additional 20 percent and returning it to the person who was
wronged. (NLT)

Luke 19:8

8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated anyone on their taxes, I
will give them back four times as much!" (NLT)

Making Amends = Reparations

Reparation is defined as "the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury."

The United States **has paid reparations to**

Slaveholders: On April 16, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill emancipating enslaved people in Washington, the end of a long struggle. But to ease slaveowners' pain, the District of Columbia Emancipation Act paid those loyal to the Union up to $300 for every enslaved person freed.

Native Americans: In 1946, Congress created the Indian Claims Commission, a body designed to hear historic grievances and compensate tribes for lost territories. It commissioned extensive historical research and ended up awarding about $1.3 billion to 176 tribes and bands.

Making Amends = Reparations

Hawaiians: The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 established a land trust for Native Hawaiians and allowed people of one half Hawaiian ancestry by blood to lease homesteads from the federal government for 99 years at a time for a total of $1.

Tuskegee Experiment 600 Black men who were unknowingly left untreated for syphilis after being mislead by officials who involuntarily enrolled them in a "treatment program" were awarded $10 million.

Florida: Lawmakers passed a bill that paid $2.1 million in reparations to survivors of the Rosewood Massacre, a 1923 incident in which a majority-black Florida town was destroyed by racist mobs

Chicago: Created a $5.5 million reparations fund for survivors of police brutality aimed at black men during the 1970s and 1980s.

Japanese: The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 apologized for Japanese American internment and granted $20,000 to every survivor.

Source: https://www.history.com/news/reparations-slavery-native-americans-japanese-internment

Perspectives on reparations

"Systems of injustice in society and in the church exact a heavy cost on those outside the centers of power and effectively block reconciliation" and "declaring that we are equal without repairing the wrongs of the past is cheap reconciliation." *Divided by Faith*, Curtiss DeYoung

Ta-Nehisi Coates opening statement on reparations at House hearing:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcCnQ3iRkys

Large group discussion 15 mins.

Reparation might take the form of creating previously unavailable opportunities or closing advantage gaps for those who have suffered marginalization.

What are some of the ways reparations could be structured today?

Biblical Principle: Restoration

Ephesians 2:16-22 New Living Translation

16 Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

17 He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near.
18 Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. 20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. 21 We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. 22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Restoration

The ultimate aim of reconciliation is the restoration of broken relationships, whether between individuals or entire communities.

Rwandan restoration: For decades, the Hutu and Tusi ethnic groups despised each other. This culminated in Rwandan genocide of 1994. Over a period of 100 days, the Hutu majority slaughtered approximately eight hundred thousand Tusi minorities. An additional two million Rwandans were displaced. Yet now, over twenty years later, hundreds of stories of reconciled relationships between Hutus and Tutsis have been written because, as a nation, Rwanda committed itself to an official truth and reconciliation process.

Small Group Discussion
15 mins.

What obstacles do you see to restoration?

- in your church?

- in Charlotte?

- in our nation?

Large group report out
5 mins.

Biblical Principle: Reproduction

Matthew 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (NLT)

Hebrews 12:14-15

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (NLT)

Why do this?

To Glorify God

We said "yes" to God's call, therefore we are called to be ambassadors of the same kind of reconciliation.

We are to be committed to fulfilling Jesus prayer for unity, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you…so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:21) (NLT)

Why do this?

To Glorify God

To bear with one another…neither avoiding conflict nor seeking approval.

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10) (NLT)

We are to lead lives worthy of that calling, by "bearing with one another in love" and maintaining the unity of the Spirit. (Ephesians 4:1-3) (NLT)

Reproduction

Through reproduction, we can continually widen our circle to include more people, creating an ever-expanding community of shalom.

We can be a credible witness for the unity we find in Christ.

Large group discussion 15 mins.

The work of reconciliation is costly. What would it cost you to lead your own group of bridge builders?

Thank You

American Christians may be fearful of the dramatic changes that have already occurred in the world and in American Christianity. Could that fear be rooted in a loss of power as the demographics of world Christianity begin to favor non-Western nations? But these changes in Christianity may be exactly what God intended, requiring American Christians to relinquish a historical dominance and embrace a greater mutuality, equality and reciprocity in twenty - first-century world Christianity.

+ Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, from his book *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Trouble Times*

22 But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.23 For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. 25 But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. James 1:2225 (NLT)

End of Part Two

Thank you!

SURVEY:

I've sent each of you a survey monkey link. Please take 10 mins, preferably before you leave, to fill out the survey.

No pressure, but I will not graduate if I don't have survey results….

I am prayerful you will continue to work in this space as I believe God is calling each of us to be

bridge builders!

APPENDIX F: INITIAL QUIZ AND ANSWERS

Quiz

"History has been white-washed"…is that true?

1. Mixed race marriages were allowed in all states after the case Loving vs. Virginia was settled in 1953. **T** **F**

2. The last recorded lynching in the US was in 1981. **T** **F**

3. Senator Edward Brooke was the first African American to serve in the US Congress. **T** **F**

4. The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre was taught in Oklahoma public schools starting in 1991. **T** **F**

5. Bubba Wallace was the first African American to win the Talladega NASCAR Cup. **T** **F**

6. Charlotte population is over 50% nonwhite **T** **F**

7. The "Slave Bible" was created to emphasize portions of the Bible that justified and fortified the system of slavery. **T** **F**

8. The US never paid freed enslaved people 40 acres and a mule. **T** **F**

9. Only a small percentage of Southerners owned enslaved people. **T** **F**

10. One of the first slave ships was named "Jesus" **T** **F**

Answers to Quiz

1. **F**
   In 2000, **Alabama** became the last state to officially remove its anti-miscegenation provision from the state constitution, the result of a ballot measure that only passed by a 60 percent margin (more than 525,000 Alabamans people voted to keep it in place).

2. **T**
   The *Last Lynching*, a new film by Ted Koppel, examines lives deeply affected by acts of hatred and racism and investigates the last recorded lynching. Surprisingly, it took place in 1981. https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95672737

3. **F**
   The first was Hiram Rhoads Revels, a chaplain from Mississippi, who served in the U.S. Senate (1870-1871); https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjetWrsQb-E

4. **F**
   Oklahoma public schools weren't instructed to teach about the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre until 2002. Even then, it was inconsistently taught and often never mentioned. https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/a-conspiracy-of-silence-tulsa-race-massacre-was-absent-from-schools-for-generations/2021/05

3. **F**
   Wendell Scott was the first African American to win the Talladega NASCAR cup in 1963. He was not awarded the trophy due to racism. His family was recently given a trophy in his honor. https://www.espn.com/racing/nascar/cup/story/_/id/32339189/bubba-wallace-becomes-2nd-black-driver-win-nascar-cup-race; https://www.autoweek.com/racing/nascar/a33398231/nascar-how-about-trophy-wendell-scott/

4. **T**
   Charlotte Observer March 20, 2011 (2010 Census)

5. **T**
   This unique artifact-in-focus exhibition, *The Slave Bible: Let the Story Be Told*, is presented by Museum of the Bible. https://www.museumofthebible.org/exhibits/slave-bible

6. **F**
   General Sherman issued Special Field Order, No. 15, confiscating Confederate land along the rice coast. Sherman would later order "40 acres and a mule" to thousands of Black families, which historians would later refer to as the first act of reparations to formerly enslaved Black people.

   The rest of the story: But the order would be short-lived. After Lincoln's assassination on April 14, 1865, the order would be reversed, and the land given to Black families would

be rescinded and returned to White Confederate landowners. https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/04/15/40-acres-mule-slavery-reparations/

7. **F**
   The 1860 census shows that in the states that would soon secede from the Union, an average of more than 32 percent of white families enslaved people. Some states had far more slave owners (46 percent of families in South Carolina, 49 percent in Mississippi) while some had far less (20 percent of families in Arkansas). https://www.history.com/news/5-myths-about-slavery?li_source=LI&li_medium=m2m-rcw-history

8. **T**
   News of the slave merchants' success spread, and they soon attracted wealthy, powerful backers, and additional support from Queen Elizabeth. In 1564 Queen Elizabeth sponsored Hawkins by lending him her very own 700-ton vessel, *Jesus of Lubeck.* https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/early_times/adventurers.htm

9. **F**
   The 1860 census shows that in the states that would soon secede from the Union, an average of more than 32 percent of white families enslaved people. Some states had far more slave owners (46 percent of families in South Carolina, 49 percent in Mississippi) while some had far less (20 percent of families in Arkansas). https://www.history.com/news /5-myths-about-slavery?li _source=LI&li_medium=m2m-rcw-history

10. **T**
    News of the slave merchants' success spread, and they soon attracted wealthy, powerful backers, and additional support from Queen Elizabeth. In 1564 Queen Elizabeth sponsored Hawkins by lending him her very own 700-ton vessel, *Jesus of Lubeck*. https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/early_times/adventurers.htm

APPENDIX G: PARKING LOT ISSUES

Welcome back! Parking Lot Topics

1. Comment that we should "do away with the Apostles Creed"

2. Why is telling history important?

3. Should our hope be in social reform or Christ?

4. What role does personal responsibility play in outcomes?

5. Is history being re-written to denigrate the "oppressors" instead of showing them as children of God?

6. Haven't we all benefited from being in this country?

7. Should white people bear the burden just because they are white?

8. The SBC funded black pastors to plant churches. To keep them under control? Or to check the box?

9. Shouldn't healthy Christians focus on the cross, not stay in lament?

10. Should we worry about social reform or souls?

11. Liberation theology is heresy.

12. Colorism

13. CRT vs. American history

APPENDIX H: PARTICIPANT POST SEMINAR SURVEY

Study on Modeling Conversations on Race

Thank you for participating in the two-part series on modeling conversations on race. This questionnaire is designed to better understand how this seminar series has helped Pastors have conversations about racial reconciliation and move toward a redemptive multi-ethnic congregation. **This is a confidential and anonymous survey**. The information you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with responses from other participants. At no time will your name be mentioned or associated with your responses.

This questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important project. By completing this confidential questionnaire, you are giving your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

This study is being conducted as partial fulfillment of my Doctor of Ministry thesis at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Massachusetts, USA.

Mary E. Wilson
Mwilson2@gordonconwell.edu
704-819-0345

For the following questions, please indicate the response that best represents your opinion.

1. After participating in the workshops, I have a better understanding of the challenges of moving towards a multi-ethnic church.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

2. After participating in the workshops, I have a better understanding of the racial injustices that face black congregants.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree

- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

3. After participating in the workshops, I have a better understanding of how to have a conversation about race to take the first steps to move towards a multi-ethnic church.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

4. After participating in the workshops, I have more knowledge to equip me to move towards a multi-ethnic church.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

5. After participating in the workshops, I feel an increased confidence to start conversations about race within my church.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

6. After participating in the workshops, I feel an increased confidence to explain why we should be moving my ministry towards a multi-ethnic church.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree

◯ Disagree

◯ Strongly disagree

7. After participating in the workshops, I am less fearful of moving my ministry towards a multi-ethnic church.

◯ Strongly agree

◯ Agree

◯ Neither agree nor disagree

◯ Disagree

◯ Strongly disagree

8. After participating in the workshops, I feel I have developed greater empathy towards the injustices experienced by black congregants.

◯ Strongly agree

◯ Agree

◯ Neither agree nor disagree

◯ Disagree

◯ Strongly disagree

9. I believe going through the Be the Bridge curriculum helped me better understand the biblical mandates of seeking unity; being bridge builders and being redemptive leaders concerning race. ◯ Strongly agree

◯ Agree

◯ Neither agree nor disagree

◯ Disagree

◯ Strongly disagree

10. Do you feel a safe environment was present that encouraged discussion on sensitive issues?

◯ Very much so

◯ Considerably

◯ Somewhat

◯ A little

- ◯ Not at all

11. Were you able to start a relationship with another participant that could continue into the future?

- ◯ Very much so
- ◯ Considerably
- ◯ Somewhat
- ◯ A little
- ◯ Not at all

12. What do you believe are the top two challenges moving a ministry towards a multi-ethnic church?

13. What did you consider to be the most important contribution of the *Be the Bridge* curriculum?

14. What did you consider to be the least important contribution of the *Be the Bridge* curriculum?

15. What do you consider to be the advantages of moving a church towards a multi-ethnic ministry?

16. Comment on the likelihood that your ministry will begin the process of moving towards a multi-ethnic ministry. What are your thoughts on this?

Demographic Questions

17. What is your race?

- ◯ White or Caucasian
- ◯ Black or African American
- ◯ Hispanic or Latino
- ◯ Asian or Asian American
- ◯ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ◯ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ◯ Another race

18. Do you currently serve in pastoral ministry?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Uncertain

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX I: FIGURES 1-14

	Study on Modeling Conversations on Race				
What did you consider to be the most important contribution of the Be the Bridge curriculum?					
Answered	**15**				
Skipped	**0**				
Respondent	**Responses**	**Categories of Responses**	**Combined Categories of Responses**	**Tally Per Category**	**Total**
1	The contribution of the clergy in the room	clergy	clergy/authenticity of white pastors	**	2
2	**Bringing Scripture to the discussion**	scripture	**scripture/scripture (not political)/Biblical engagement/scripture/Bible perspective/Purpose/awareness of th ework/history with bible/history ref & accuracy**	*********	**9**
3	The purpose of the curriculum	purpose		combined	
4	**History w/biblical references**	history w/bible		combined	
5	An strong awareness of the work involved.	awareness		combined	
6	**-Giving us courage to enter into uncomfortable conversations for the sake of glorifying Christ & righting great wrongs**	courage to continue		*	**1**
7	Historical references and accuracy	history		combined	
8	**The multi-ethnic dialogue & challenges.**	MEC dialogue		*	**1**
9	Scriptural foundation for those who don't want to have a "political" conversation, but are willing to have a biblical one.	awareness		combined	
10	**Outline of process**	outline		*	**1**
11	The environment.	environment		*	1
12	**Biblical engagement**	authenticity of white pastors		**combined**	
13	Scriptural foundation			combined	

Figure 1: The most important contribution of *Be The Bridge* curriculum

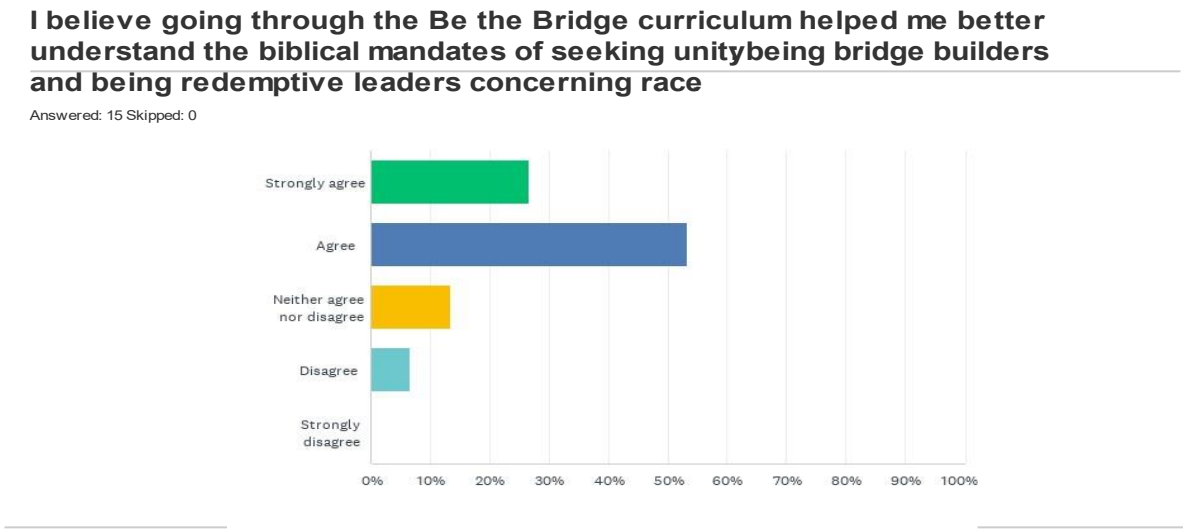

Figure 2: Participants better understand the biblical mandates of seeking unity; being bridge builders and being redemptive leaders concerning race.

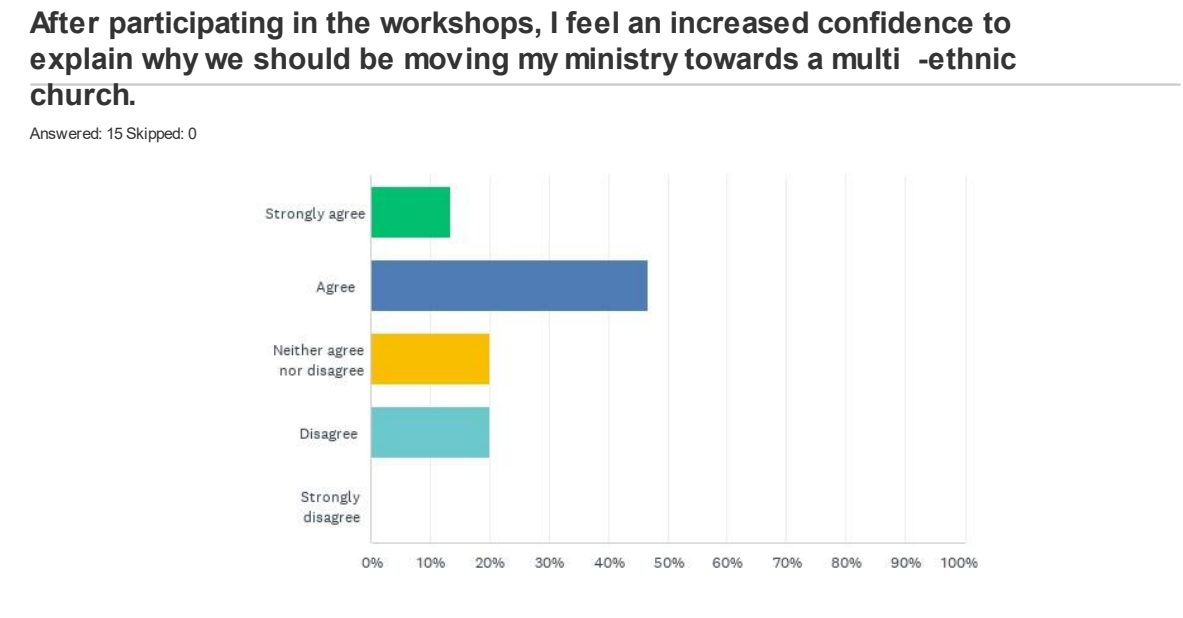

Figure 3: Participants feel an increased confidence to explain why we should be moving to multi-ethnic church.

Study on Modeling Conversations on Race					
What do you consider to be the advantages of moving a church towards a multi-ethnic ministry?					
Answered	15				
Skipped	0				
Respondent	Responses	Categories of Responses	Combined Categories of Responses	Tally Per Category	Total
1	Healing, Wholeness, & Prosperity	healing	healing	*	1
2	**Will move everyone closer to Jesus**	closer to Jesus	closer to Jesus/demonstrate God's love/evangelism/toward a Jesus model	****	**4**
3	To be the church God intends	to be the church	to be the church/reflect God/represent the kingdom/more like NT church/better Christ. Church/fulfill Christ's prayer/reflection of God/see diff aspects of God/reconciiation/church space for reconcil.	**********	10
4	**Greater reflection of God**	reflection of God		combined	
5	Better representation of the kingdom of God.	representation of the kingdom		combined	
6	**A multi-ethnic church best demonstrates Christ's love and glory to an ever-divided, hate filled world.**	demonstrate Christ's love		combined	
7	It would look like more of the church in the New Testament	more like NT church		combined	
8	**It will move us toward a Jesus model, a Jesus perception of church.**	toward a Jesus model		combined	
9	The church can be an organic space for reconciliation and grass-roots change. Our worldview changes when we worship with someone different from us.	church can be space for reconciliation		combined	
10	**Visual evangelism for younger generations and evidence of redemption/reconciliation available in Christ**	evangelism		combined	
11	A stronger, better Christian united church.	evidence of redemp/recon in Christ		combined	
12	**The fulfillment of Jesus high priestly prayer that we would all be one.**	better Christian united church		combined	
13	Reaching a rather large percentage of the population who would not be drawn to a one culture congregation or any church, but are comfortable in multicultural spaces.	fulfill Christ's prayer		combined	
14	**The ability to see the different aspects of God as revealed through His creation**	ability to see diff aspects of God		combined	
15	The advantages would be (1) diversity of experiencing life through other cultural expressions, (2) the ability to build power across racial groups to address systemic oppression.	diversity of life		*	1
		build power to address systems		*	1

Figure 4: The reasons to move toward becoming a multi-ethnic church.

Study on Modeling Conversations on Race					
What do you believe are the top two challenges moving a ministry towards a multi-ethnic church?					
Answered	**15**				
Skipped	**0**				
Respondent	**Responses**	**Categories of Responses**	**Combined Categories of Responses**	**Tally Per Category**	**Total**
1	defining what a multi-ethnic church looks like Apathy	Defing MEC	Defining MEC	*	1
2	**Awareness** **Priorities**	Apathy		*	1
3	Desire Understanding	Awareness	Awareness(11111)/understanding/desire/Shared understanding/understanding Black church/more conversations about injustice	***** *****	10
4	**1) Integrating cultures** **2) Getting past the hurt**	Priorities	1	*	1
5	Awareness, Accountability on both sides	Desire		combined	
6	**- Awareness of issues of injustice** **- Pride and self-centeredness that leads to a mindset of scarcity**	Understanding		combined	
7	Awareness Taking the time to develop relationships	Integrating culture	integrating cult/cross culture min/inclusivity/cross cult leadership/relationship	*******	7
8	**1. Past History** **2. Present system realities**	Getting past hurt	Getting past the hurt/forgiveness/past history/accountability	****	4
9	Housing segregation. Denominational racial segregation.	Accountability		combined	
10	**1) different understandings of church's role in black community vs. white community** **2) geography in CLT**	Pride & self-centeredness	pride&self-centeredness/fear and arrogance	**	2
11	Being willing to have more conversations about injustice. Teaching better so that others feel a call to better serve Christ and be one family in Christian love.	Relationships		combined	
12	**Awareness** **Forgiveness**	Past History		combined	
13	Having an understanding and passion for cross-cultural ministry. Being committed to a cross-cultural leadership	Systems	1	*	1
14	**Arrogance & Fear. Can all sides be humble and brave?**	Housing	1	*	1
15	True Inclusivity Shared understanding of biblical mandate	Denominational	1	*	1
		Understanding Black church		combined	
		Geography (in Clt)	1	*	1
		More conversations about injustice		combined	
		Teaching Christian love		combined	
		Forgiveness		combined	
		Cross-cult min.		combined	
		Cross-Cult leadership		combined	
		Arrogance & fear		combined	
		Inclusivity		combined	
		Shared understanding		combined	

Figure 5: The top two challenges to moving a ministry toward a multi-ethnic church

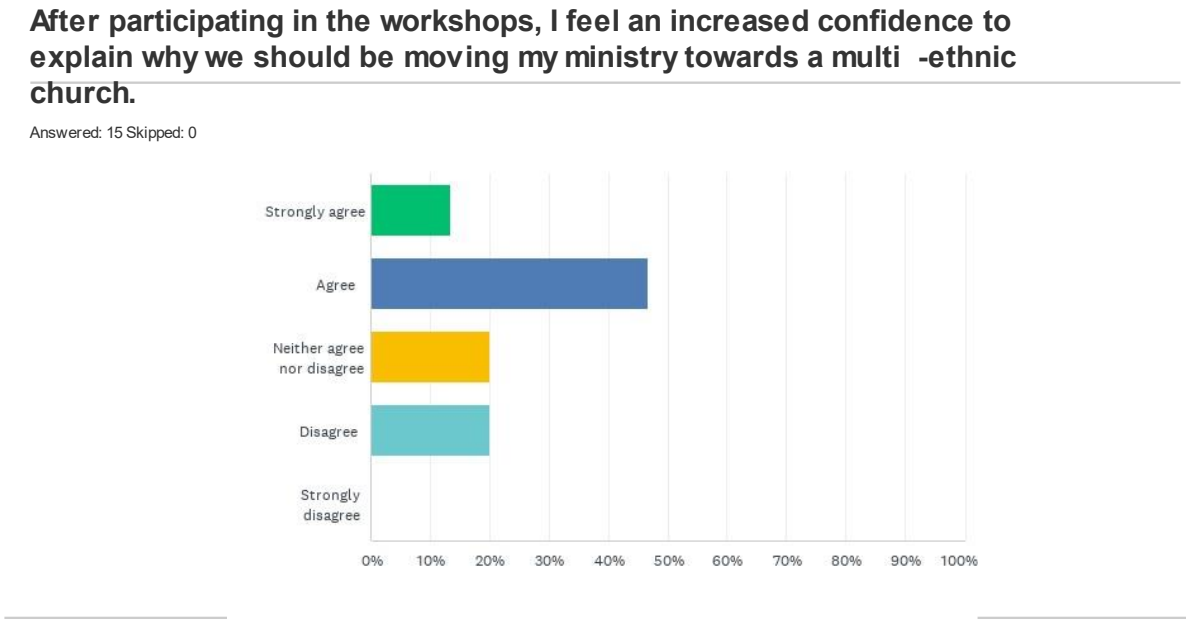

Figure 6: Participants have a better understanding of the multi-ethnic church.

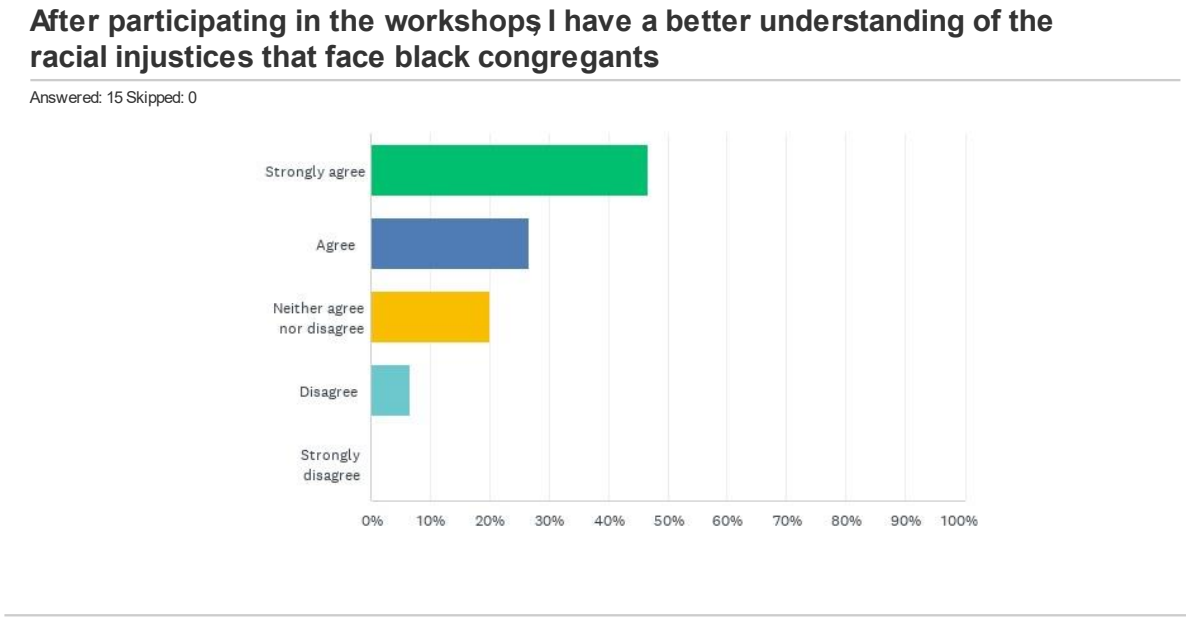

Figure 7: Participants have a better understanding of the racial injustices that face Black congregants.

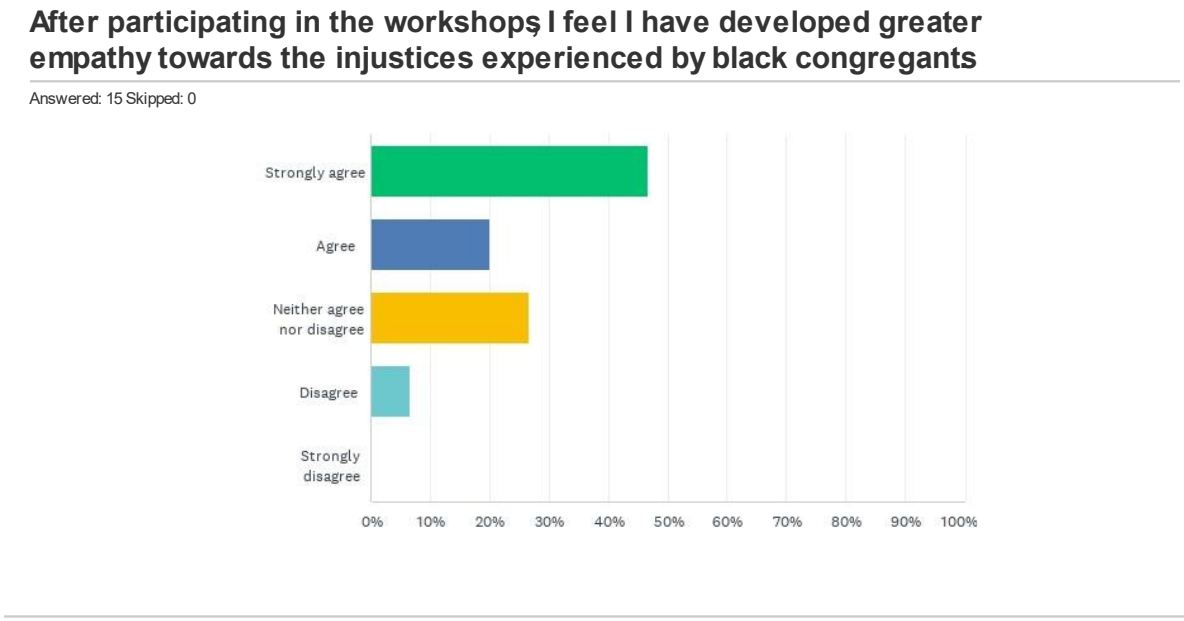

Figure 8: Demonstrates participants developed greater empathy experienced by Black congregants after the seminar.

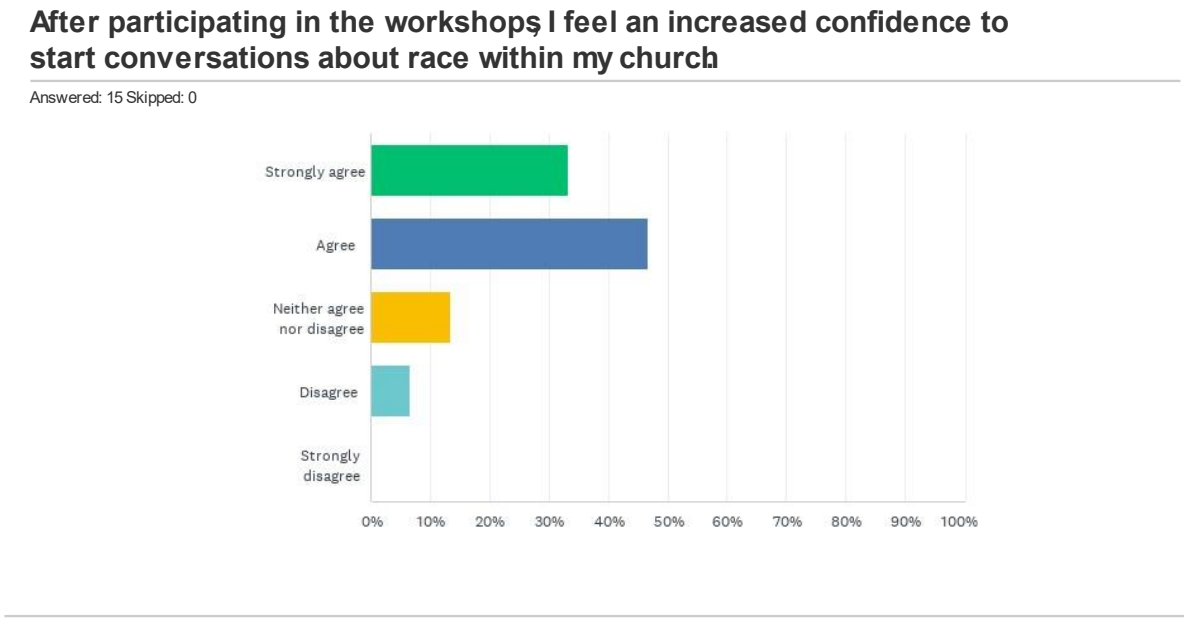

Figure 9: Participant's confidence to start conversations about race.

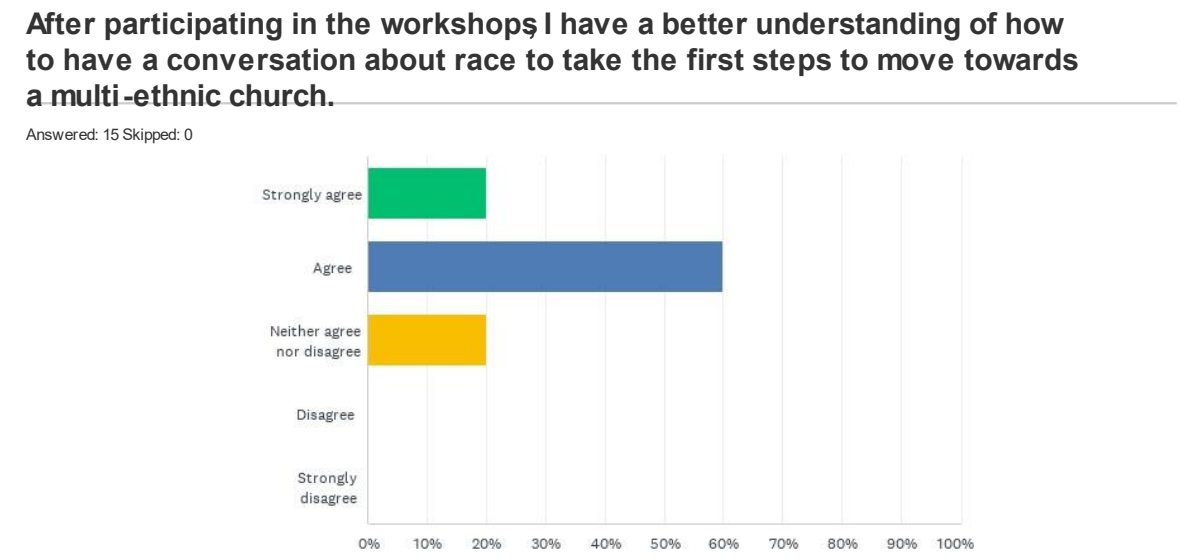

Figure 10: Participant's understanding of how to have a conversation about race as a first step.

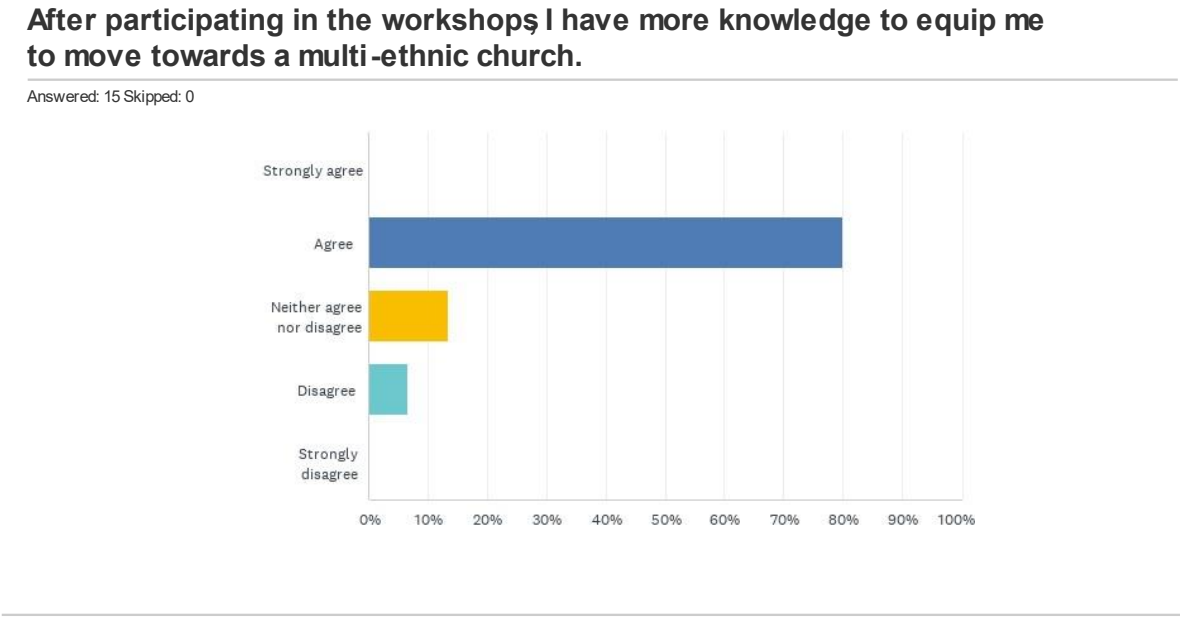

Figure 11: Participant's knowledge to move toward a multiethnic church.

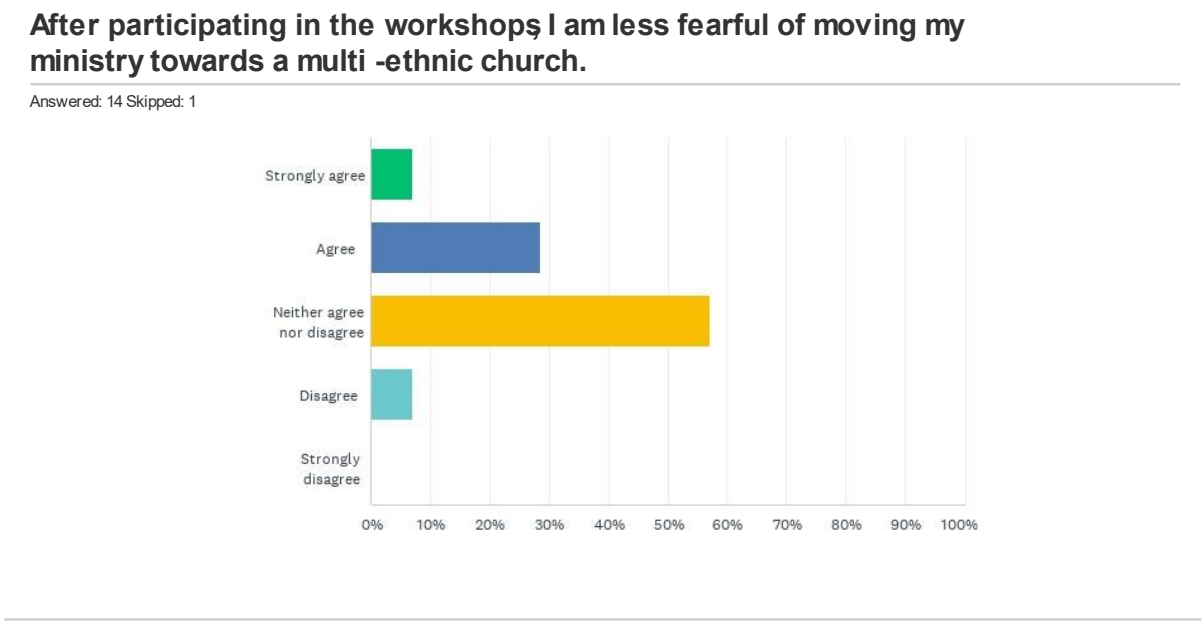

Figure 12: Participant level of fear regarding moving ministry toward multi-ethnic church.

Study on Modeling Conversations on Race					
Comment on the likelihood that your ministry will begin the process of moving towards a multi-ethnic ministry. What are your thoughts on this?					
Answered	**14**				
Skipped	**1**				
Respondent	**Responses**	**Categories of Responses**	**Combined Categories of Responses**	**Tally Per Category**	**Total**
1	Absolutely. Add'l to #18 below: But have for 17 years.	Absolutely			
2	**Just awareness will take a long time and a lot of work.**	Awareness will take time		*	1
3	At this point, we are more likely to work to be a church that is racially reconciled.	More likely to be racially reconcilled		*	1
4	**Not at this time**	Not at this time		*	1
5	Sometime in the near future. We have a congregation with a small amt of multicultural attendance.	Sometime in the near future		*	1
6	**Very likely - this curriculum has inspired me to build bridges step by step - relationship by relationship.**	Very likely	absolutely/very likely/moving in the dir./working to amplify voices/seeking diverse leadership/have already started/have already started	*******	7
7	We are clearly moving in that direction. More needs to happen.	Moving in the direction		combined	
8	**We may not physically move towards it but I now have the tools to adequately discuss it with my congregation.**	Not moving but now have the tools		*	1
9	We are in the process of trying to Amplify marginalized voices at my largely white mainline protestant church. We believe this is the first step in making a safe and welcoming place for racial diversity in our congregation.	Working to amplify marginalized voices		combined	
10	**Many challenges but seeking to diversify the ethnic presence in leadership as a beginning**	Seeking diverse leadership		combined	
11	We have already started.	Have already started		combined	
12	**We have been and will continue to do so in the future.**	Have already started		combined	
13	I am certain that our ministry is not moving towards a multi-ethnic ministry, although there are a number of cultures within the ministry, although they are quite in the minority. I am optimistic about the growth of multi-ethnic ministries in the USA for many reasons Post-Covid. Our nation is changing and multi-ethnic ministry, in my opinion is inevitable.	Not moving towards ME, but many cultures within the ministry	Not moving/don't see us moving	**	2
14	**In my current parish, I don't see us moving towards a multi-ethnic ministry.**	Don't see us moving toward MEC		combined	

Figure 13: Participant's likelihood of moving toward a multi-ethnic church.

Study on Modeling Conversations on Race					
What did you consider to be the least important contribution of the Be the Bridge curriculum?					
Answered	**12**				
Skipped	**3**				
Respondent	**Responses**	**Categories of Responses**	**Combined categories of Responses**	**Tally Per Category**	**Total**
1	The lunch :)	lunch		*	1
2	**We really needed more time to get to know each other**	not enough time	not enough time/did not have enough time/not enough time	****	4
3	That we did not have more time ot explore it in these two sessions.	not enough time		combined	
4	**N/A**				N/A
5	A focused discussion on the diversity of biblical interpretation.	bibl. Interpre	biblical/scripture/scripture	**	2
6	**While I deeply appreciated the videos, I grew most through scripture and group discussion.**	videos	videos/videos one perspective	*	1
7	Thought some passages of scripture were a stretch & maybe even out of context	scripture wrong	scripture out of context/scripture stretch	**	2
8	**Not sure. Some Scriptures applied seemed to be a bit of a stretch.**	examples - need more contemporary		*	1
9	Not enough time to dig deeper and grow.	more time		combined	
10	**The videos were representative of one point of view.**	videos one view		combined	
11	Not enough contemporary examples (in terms of what is occurring in contemporary life, locally and globally)	needed more contemp examples		*	1
12	**The length of these particular sessions were too short.**	sessions too short		combined	

Figure 14: Participants response to least important part of *Be The Bridge* curriculum

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